

ARENA



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FOREWORD

THIS issue of *Arena* opens with two items from Greece. First, translation of Vrettakos' magnificent poem, *33 Days*, which shows how epic breadth can be won in a passionate response to immediate political events—when the poet's response makes him one with the struggling forces of the people. Kedros, at a less intense level, manages to convey the indomitable quality of his people in the two stories that we give.

With the next items we step across to a very different scene, that of the United States. Lorca, like Vrettakos, had his close folk-links; his reaction to New York has its close affinities with the deep and simple human elements that lend the protests of poet like Vrettakos (or Loudemis, printed in *Arena* 5) their purity and dignity. He thus gives us, in his sense of human outrage in New York, the link in turn with the poets, the forces inside the States, struggling for a world without outrage. We print here five young U.S.A. poets who variously show that there is another American Way than that known to Truman or MacArthur.

We next turn to our own land, with an essay by Jan Kott, a Polish critic, which reveals the keen interest that such countries as the New Poland feel for our great tradition; the new and clarifying focus they are bringing to bear.

Such work is a challenge to us, a reminder that it is high time to get on ourselves with this work of revaluation. With the essay on Coleridge (to be completed in *Arena* 7) we start off this important task. Coleridge has been chosen as the one English thinker who, working from bases in our own tradition, came close to a form of dialectical thought (akin to that of Hegel). His strengths and weaknesses are thus of basic significance if we are to understand both what is our own vital tradition to be revived, and what it was that went wrong with our culture after Shelley and Keats.

We intend to discuss at length our great Romantics, in whom is passionately and concretely defined the struggle against the capitalism

of their days; and to analyse the links, through the vast Victorian distortion and vulgarisation of culture, between them and our own world. Carlyle, Ruskin, Morris are of particular importance for the clarification of this problem.

We intend further to connect this kind of inquiry with the analysis of significant figures of our own day. To analyse the nature of the decadents like Eliot who have been evaluated to a false position through their value to an imperialist State; but also to discuss the writers who have made positive contributions between the wars: Sean O'Casey and Edith Sitwell, Hugh MacDiarmid and Grassie Gibbon, Lewis Jones and others—the writers with the future in them, who represent the tradition we must put in the place of the deathly values boosted in all the organs of the ruling-class (or by groups which, though considering themselves dissident and independent, are in fact bound up with that ruling-class in the last resort, and who, after keeping face by minor criticism, come to heel on major issues).

Then a discussion of the Comic Strip, one of the 'artforms' in which the demoralising forces of U.S.A. imperialism are most nakedly revealed, and which must be understood and fought as part of the struggle for all that is good in our national culture; and finally some factual material.

Nicephoros Vrettakos

33 DAYS

This Greek poem deals with the 33 days in the winter of 1944-5 when the British troops in Greece, at the orders of our Government, turned on the patriot forces and ruthlessly bombed and massacred them.

We suggest that it is illuminating to compare the method here with that of the earlier prophetic books by William Blake, especially his French Revolution, where he seeks to build directly an epical picture of the historical struggle, though at the same time enlarging the vision of struggle by bringing man and nature together in a single focus of transformation.

The heroic dimensions of the figures, the way in which the titanic shock of basic conflicts leads to a fusion of man and nature (because the political struggle and its outcome at every moment crucially change men's productive relations and therefore their relation to nature): all this kind of poetic development can be seen in both the early Blake and in Vrettakos. Blake proceeds towards a working-out of the symbolism in its own abstracted space-time, without the direct point of contact with contemporary event, because the fall of the Jacobins led more and more to a terrible entanglement of forces which Blake in his world could only visualise as resolved in symbol. But here, in the world of Vrettakos and his compeers like Nazim Hikmet, the relation of political and poetic energies is clear and stable because the poets know that there is a social class, a mass-movement, capable of resolving in fact the violent contradictions and horrors.

We may perhaps see the direct literary link between Blake and a poet like Vrettakos in the influence of Ossian, so basic for Blake, which swept over the continent and continued potent there long after its fading-out in England.—EDITOR.

(1)

THUS it happened then in Greece.

And in those days a strong wind blew from the west.

And clouds came out of the north and rose to the horizon.

And you could not see the sunrise.

And strange currents that seemed to come from the south and from the east and from the north furrowed the clouds.

And in those days you opened the windows and you sensed strange sparks electrifying the oppressive atmosphere over the city, down to the houses and down to the graves.

And in those days the gendarmes presented a petition to his Excellency.

'If you wish us to kill more,' they told him, 'You must raise our wages. The Germans were also people; but they paid us better.'

And in those days the people crowded the streets and poured and moaned.

And every day the people grew in numbers and they huddled in the squares and they spilled over to the sidewalks and they beat themselves and the city heard their wave and it feared the Lord and it felt sorry and sighed.

And in those days the people's exploiters met in council.

And they looked at the sea through the windows.

And they gauged the sea and it blackened by the clouds in the distance.

'Excellency, in any case, you should . . .'

The liberty of the people is destructive to the king's interests.

'Excellency, in any case, you should . . .'

And they closed the windows and they began to write sinister orders.

And infants in their cradles understood and began to cry.

And the people returned to the city and they called them thieves.

They had paid for their liberty with much blood.

And the people returned to the city and asked for the honour of their dead and they called them thieves.

And on the third of December, the Supreme Law—the divine law and the human law which meet on Mount Sinai and take the shape of a thunderbolt and make the nations quake—began to conduct its heroic symphony over the city.

And on that day brief, disturbing signs crowded against each other under the clouds.

And their forest swayed against the wind.

And the people advanced.

And the ambush waited.

And the people advanced against them, valiant and handsome and equal like Christ.

And the people stretched out their palms to block the muzzles of the guns that suddenly appeared shining against their breasts.

And that hour the people took on a light and strange hue.

And the people advanced against them and they rose like a rising sun.

And the volleys struck the church of the Nation.

And the sea quaked.

And the sea roared.

And the level of the waters kept rising.

And the wounded dipped the flags in their blood and hopping on their broken knees they lifted them higher.

And others fell prone on the asphalt.

And other dragged them to the edges of the street chanting liberty and justice.

And they lay supine one by one and each wrapped himself in his blood-stained flag and clenched his fist on his chest and died.

Thus on the third of December the sun went down.

On the fourth lightning flashed over the 20 coffins that went to and fro on the sea's surface.

And the wave swelled the shoulders of the crowd.

And its endless wave stretched out and obeyed and rolled on the broad avenue.

And in its current it carried branches of palm, signs, crutches, with a forest of black flags blown by the wind and entangled one with the other.

And in a little while you could hear again the moaning of the sea.

And in a little while it appeared again returning, blackening under the clouds.

And the currents of people mingled like waves and swelled in the city cross-roads.

And the clouds drizzled on the clenched fists.

(2)

Thus it happened then in Greece.

And they began to pack the gendarmes in trucks.

And we still had on the bandages of the German wounds.

And the gendarmes had not yet washed their hands.

And our blood had not yet dried.

And trucks started to race under the clouds with their rifles ready to shoot.

And wearing their helmets, our soldiers began to march down in close formation to the centre of the city.

And our soldiers were handsome like the Achaeans.

And our women would come out on the balconies and the windows under the clouds:

'Where are you going without horses, my boys?' . . .

And all over the city you could hear:

'Liberty or death!'

And our soldiers were handsome like the Achaeans.

And we asked them about their horses; and they smiled.

They had their horses and armies within them.

They had within them horses from on high that rested on their hind legs and stood up.

And they balanced on their hind legs, and they seemed to be suspended in air, barely stepping on earth.

And within them they had scarlet horses that glistened and neighed and leaped.

And the horsemen sat on golden saddles.

And they wore gleaming jackets, golden jackets and light with sun.

Because it was the sun of liberty that carried them in its tide.

And they all started out together, together they sang and together they marched to the places where human duty meets with the sun and death.

And that hour was one of the greatest hours brought by the ages under the shadow of the Acropolis.

And that hour it happened as if a divine spark had cut the veins of liberty and everything was running light.

And it shone deep down the earth of Attica.

And within the earth the faces of the dead were lit.

And all at once the mountains and the houses sparkled.

And the birds flew over the roofs balancing in the air and shining as if they were made of gold.

And the glowing December clouds shone over our holy soldiers who marched with their rifles hanging on their shoulders, one back of the other.

And they were so strong and bare and they marched so naturally, so evenly and they were like the elements of nature.

And flags waved by the thousands over the barricades.

Liberty or death!

(3)

Thus it happened then in Greece.

And bullets criss-crossed that night lighting the window panes of the city.

And through the city streets desolation walked hand in hand with death.

And the last proclamation of the army commander went unnoticed on the walls.

The girls were carrying bullets.

The old women were singing.

And our soldiers were fighting without food or sleep.

And we saw impassable peaks rising in their souls.

And in their souls we saw the throne of Zeus above the snow gilded by the sun.

And we felt their entrails closing and opening like eagle's wings, flapping their wings as they soared in haste towards the glare of the storms.

And we heard the S.S. who had murdered our brothers and our fathers and we heard the gendarmes who had abducted our sisters moaning among the muzzles of the British cannon.

And the 'Lord Byron' student battalion, fighting in the centre of the city recited verses from the 'Curse of Athena' and wondered what could console the shade of Byron in this world.

And Elgin answered guffawing as he sat on the heavy cannons that furrowed the dark with the course of their shells.

And with each of their volleys the Acropolis was lit.

And in their gleam at the very top you could see the Temple quaking.

And the 'Lord Byron' student battalion fought in the centre of the city.

And in the night, invisible powers passing over them, suspended strange bunches of rays that riddled the clouds and lighted up their helmets.

And fighting they visioned unending plantations and new cities and churches and new bells and . . .

Christ is risen!

Christ is risen!

And they fought with a smile.

And from day to day the volleys thickened.

And from day to day the smokes and the clouds and the flames and the dust thickened from the fall of the shells and the houses that were blown up.

And the stretchers cut through the songs on the streets.

And the nurses erect amid the bullets, lowered their white blood-stained flags and wiped their eyes.

'Liberty or death!'

(4)

Thus it happened then in Greece.

And at night we would listen at the window.

And the darkness rolled on the street.

And our children were frightened.

And our children would see our soldiers in their sleep asking them for bread and they would wake up and cry.

And the roaring cannons looked for our soldiers fighting without food and without sleep.

And with each of their volleys light and rain poured on our window panes and out on the street Christ was walking all alone.

And every once in a while, as he faced the blazing muzzles of the cannons, Christ would open his mouth, like a bird, without food and without sleep.

And the barricades grew higher.

And the women tore their petticoats to bandage the wounded.

And while dying our soldiers still stood up on the barricades.

And down on the sea we saw huge boats coming and going looking like death.

And the women would come out at the windows and see the night blend with the day and they would wipe their eyes.

'In the harbours, my children, they are unloading cannons and tanks.'

And our soldiers turned their heads and smiled under their helmets and answered them by taking aim.

'Victory is our duty!'

And it blew and rained and flashed lightning.

And then the women would lean their foreheads against the window panes and weep.

'Where are you going my children without horses?'

And a last downpour of thunder and lightning lit the low hanging clouds and the barricades and the houses and our soldiers standing up on the barricades.

And our soldiers could still be heard singing in the darkness.

The reactionaries and the gendarmes embraced and kissed on that last morning.

'My children!'

'What happened?'

'Our soldiers . . .'

'Don't cry . . .'

And together we raised our heads and we saw our flag waving higher.

The sun, flag of brotherhood.

Our flag.

Liberty or death!

(5)

Thus it happened then in Greece.

And our flags retreated in formation in the darkness.

And as they retreated we saw them one back of the other shining in the night.

And the days numbered 33.

And the people's jailers rejoiced in their victory.

And they beat the air and the people with their whips.

And the broken water pipes seethed mournfully in the chaos of the houses in ruins.

And the gendarmes lashed the dead.

And on that night we took our pickaxes and we dug up the Attica earth and with many tears we buried our dead.

And the gendarmes unburied them.

And we buried them again.

And again they unburied them.

And they would throw them face down in trucks from one end of the city they would dump them out at the other end.

The old women would get up at midnight and disperse in the dark.

And walking they hid in corners of buildings and the roots of trees.

And once there they would return carrying the corpses of our boys in their arms.

And they would go down and wall up the basement windows and dig pits and bury them in their basements.
And they would go down there at night and light candles for them and throw flowers over them.

And they would gather in groups of five and ten and kneel around them and sing the songs of our gallant boys as they wept:
'You fought for five years.'
And they would stand up and turn their heads to the sky looking for God, and they pulled at their breasts.
'You fought for five years . . .'
And they would fall over the graves.
And their black hair reached down to hell.

And over the snow the flags of our soldiers retreated in formation.

(6)

Thus it happened then in Greece.

And liberty would knock on doors.
And they would chase her out of her own land.

And that night Byron was sighing as he sat high upon the Acropolis over the Saronic Gulf facing England.
And that night Sophocles awakened and Pindar and Solon and Plato.
And they wore the helmets of our dead.
And at midnight they kept watch for five minutes at the graves of our dead.
And then cutting through the dirge of the city, all of them went up where the gendarmes and the reactionaries could see nothing.

And that hour the sun came up.
And there were squadrons of French soldiers who had been killed fighting in front of the Bastille.
Russian soldiers who had been killed in snow-covered Petrograd.
Soldiers who had fallen in the university city of Madrid.
Women who had leaped over the cliffs of Zalongo.
And all of them had formed a circle high up on the Acropolis.
And they did honours.
And they presented arms as they looked at the sun and saw in its flame the 'Lord Byron' student battalion marching past.
And all of them started to unfurl their flags.
And fraternising their flags, they all mingled in the 'Lord Byron' student battalion whose soldiers had been killed in the centre of the city.
And that hour the sun went down.
And the dirge of the city grew louder.

We fought for five years; and we are still fighting. And in the prisons they made us wear the thorny wreath of Christ, and they still make us wear it.

But over the mud where the mercenaries of night walk with their whips, higher than all the prisons, higher, much higher, higher than any other time, you could hear:

'Glory and honour to our dead! Glory and honour to our dead!'

Brothers of the world.

Our flag is still waving.

Liberty or death!

Translated from the Greek by Rae Dalven.

(Nicephoros Vrettakos was born in Levetsova, Sparta, in 1911. He was educated in Gytheon, a port in southern Peloponnese. From 1930 he has lived in Athens, and has published there the following books of poems (1933-47): *Descending to the Silence of the Centuries*, *Grimaces of Man*, *The War*, *The Swan's Letter*, *The Archangel's Voyage*, *Margarita*, *The Fire's Peak*, *The Heroic Symphony*, *33 Days*, *Fairytale City*. His prose works include *The Naked Child* (1939) and *The Savage* (1945). He won the State Poetry Prize for 1940. In 1948 he became chief editor of the magazine *Elefthera Grammata* after the arrest of Demetrios Photiades.)

(1) DANGEROUS MISSION

IT was still too early for the moon to light up the road which wound round the first slope, ran down into the Axios valley and then climbed again, higher and higher into the mountains. The streaks of light projecting into the darkness from the car lamps felt out the road cautiously. But as for Samaras, he had his foot right down on the accelerator like a madman.

'Hey, Samaras,' barked Dzavalas, who was sitting next to the driver, 'are you crazy? You'll be tipping us into the first ravine! . . .'

Samaras, his head bending over the wheel, hissed between his teeth, 'I prefer that to having my throat slit!'

The soldiers in the back seat caught these words blown back at them and leaned towards the two men in front.

'I know,' said Marinakis. 'A pal told me this. They ambushed a military lorry the other day. They made all the chaps get out. And their captain, who'd a huge beard, he asks a kid of thirteen that was carrying a machine-gun too: "Hungry?" "Hungry as a wolf," the kid says. "Go to it then, eat," the captain says, and it was the kid who slit the throats of all the government soldiers, one after the other! . . .'

Samaras cut a corner too sharply and the tyres screeched harshly. The road was still climbing, and the pines which ran along it on the mountain-side made an opaque curtain, even darker than the night. But on the other side, down towards the river, the sky was beginning to lighten; for the moon, still hidden behind the hills, filled it with a whitish mysterious glow.

The men stared at the hint of light and tried not to think of the ravine, or the partisans, or the fate which awaited them if they fell into their hands. But uneasiness proved stronger than will, and after a long silence Kolokouvaros said:

'May they be roasted in Hell for all eternity!'

'Who d'you mean?' asked the others.

'The ones who bundled us into this jeep on such a night . . .'

Marinakis slapped his machine-gun savagely.

'Let 'em come!' he cried excitedly, looking around him as if he could already make out his enemies. 'Let 'em come! I'll give it to 'em hot, I'll show 'em who Marinakis is!'

Well, anyway,' said Kolokouvaros gloomily, 'I've told my wife my last wishes; you know, about that olive-field . . .'

 He leaned towards the sergeant. 'Say, Samaras, how much further is it?'

Samaras didn't reply and Kolokouvaros groaned, 'Oh, Lord! We won't get out of this! I can feel it, it's my last night.' He strained to pierce the darkness, then started violently, 'Look there!' he cried in anguish. 'It's moving!'

'Where?'

'There! There! Can't you see? Behind that tree, the big one burnt by lightning . . .'

Panting, the men levelled their guns in the direction indicated. The moon flickered through the clouds. The rocks and the great pines with twisted roots moved with ghostly life. Huge night birds, scared at the approach of the motor, flew up silently.

'I can't see a thing!' exclaimed Dzavalas. 'Not a thing.'

'Nor me!' cried the others.

Samaras had made the jeep leap like a wounded animal, now he slowed down and mopped his face with a handkerchief.

'You're in a funk,' said Dzavalas turning to Kolokouvaros. 'You're seeing spooks. Look here, I'm not so afraid of the rebels as all that, and I don't believe all these stories they're telling. After all, they're our own people. . . . I'll tell you a good one, as long as it doesn't go any further, eh? Not a word to the higher-ups, they'd be ready to put me in clink.'

'Don't worry! We won't split!'

'Well, then! One of my cousins is with the *andartes* and he wrote to me.'

'Wrote to you?'

'Yes, they came down to Livadia the other day and during the time they occupied the town, he just posted the letter . . .'

'And what did he say?'

'That if ever I realised that I'm a poor bastard serving under the fascists and if I changed my mind, then I ought to go and join him. That's just what he said . . .'

Dzavalas had spoken these words with a pride he couldn't hide.

'Fool,' said Samaras, 'you think that because you've got a cousin with the rebels they'll spare you, once they get their hands on you . . .'

Dzavalas was already sorry he'd spoken. You couldn't joke among government troops with stories like that.

'Not a word to the officers,' he begged them, 'you promised, didn't you? Particularly not to Pitzakis, he's a devil!'

Kolokouvaros made a large gesture of crossing himself.

'God forbid we come up against Pitzakis again!' he said lugubriously.

They had now passed the first height and the road was going down into the ravine. The ground was even more stony and covered by pine-logs, and the jeep advanced painfully with frequent skids. All of a sudden, an explosion shook the valley and went on echoing from side to side. The men ducked instinctively, trying to protect themselves behind the sides of the vehicle.

'That's done it!' said Samaras, putting on the brake.

'What? What's the matter?'

'A flat!' said Samaras.

The men sighed with relief.

'We've got a spare!' suggested Marinakis.

'Idiot! That's not what I meant! We'll be spotted. For sure!'

'For sure!' Kolokouvaros repeated. A kind of anger took hold of him. 'This isn't war, what we're doing. No, this isn't war . . . it's anything you like, but not a war . . .'

'Get out, I'll change the wheel,' said Samaras. 'Get your positions and keep your eyes open. At the slightest movement . . .'

The men had hardly dispersed when Dzavalas came running back. 'There's a light down in the valley,' he panted.

Samaras dropped his tools and swore.

'Where?'

Dzavalas signed to him to follow. He very soon stopped at the edge of a small terrace which dominated the countryside. A light was shining through the trees, about a couple of hundred yards away. In the midst of all the wildness, in the ravine now echoing with the roar of the river, this light looked so out of place that it created distrust.

The men discussed it in low voices.

'It's a fire . . .'

'No, it's a cottage . . .'

'Shepherds?'

'I don't hear any dogs.'

'That's true, the dogs would have given the alarm by now.'

'Peculiar, that, a cottage without dogs . . .'

'Suppose there are some . . .'

'I'd like to have a look, I would!'

'You're barmy. Throw yourself into the lion's den!'

'What if we took them prisoner?'

'Prisoner?'

'Yes, prisoner . . . live or dead . . .'

Marinakis was bubbling over with courage, but he found Kolokouvaros a determined opponent.

'Listen here!' said the latter. 'We've been sent to deliver a letter to the Divisional General and not to get prisoners. What's come over you? Let's get away quick . . .'

But Samaras sided with Marinakis.

'If it's rebels, they'll hear us coming and bar the road. So it'd be better to find out . . .'

Obedying the instructions of Samaras, who was already dreaming of winning a decoration, the men moved fan-wise towards the hut, their tommy-guns at the ready. Marinakis was detailed off to penetrate as near as possible and find out the number of rebels. At an agreed signal they would all throw themselves on the door, firing with all weapons.

Seen close up, the cottage looked just like the herdsmen's hovels that could be found here and there among the barren inhospitable mountains. On one side there was a small window which threw out a yellowish light, and on the other side a sort of stable from which, at regular intervals, came the plaintive bleating of goats. Marinakis, who had disappeared on his reconnaissance, soon came back on his

tracks. To the great astonishment of his comrades, he was showing no caution at all.

'No need to worry!' he said in his normal voice.

'Quiet! for God's sake . . .', said Kolokouvaros, who was flat on his stomach, with his teeth slightly chattering.

'No need to worry, I tell you! Three old women . . . that's all!' Marinakis looked a bit resentful.

'You're sure? No one hidden?'

'Not a soul!' replied Marinakis. 'Come on, let's go.'

The men came out of hiding and Kolokouvaros carefully brushed off the pine-needles stuck to his uniform. Then, with one kick, they opened the door.

In the bare room three women were bending over a stewpan hung over a primitive fire-place. They stared at the intruders with hardly a moment of surprise and, without further ceremony, one went on throwing dry branches into the fire, another continued stirring the soup with a wooden spoon, while the third went on crumbling a small block of salt over the pan, the salt appearing immaculately white against the filth of her hands.

Samaras went up to the women.

'Hey, you old witches!' he said menacingly. 'Any *andartes* hidden round here? And no lies!' he added, ostentatiously caressing his gun. 'You'll pay dear! . . .'

The youngest of the three women, whose wrinkles showed that even she was in the sixties, shrugged one shoulder, and fixed the men with her small, cunning eyes.

'No *andartes* this way,' she said in a rusty, curiously strong voice. 'We're the *andartes* . . .'

'You, *andartes*?' repeated Samaras, frowning. Then he burst out laughing. 'Ha, ha, ha!' he cried, slapping his knees. 'She's a cute one, she is! Marinakis, Dzavalas, take a squint at these *andartes* for me! . . .'

And all the other men roared with laughter until they shook all over. Kolokouvaros in particular was doubled up and breathless. He wanted to say something, but he couldn't get it out and just pointed at the women while he nearly suffocated in a fresh burst of hilarity. The old women, caught up in the general jollity, cackled too, showing their blackened teeth and grotesquely waving the spoon.

'That's enough!' said Samaras finally, becoming serious again. He sniffed the air. 'Your soup doesn't smell half bad, old women! Is there enough for us all?'

He let himself drop on to a pile of half-sodden straw. His men followed his example. They laid down their arms and lit cigarettes. Kolokouvaros took off his boots with a sigh of relief. During the last few hours, his nerves had been severely strained. The presence of the women, the decayed old hearth, all quietened and calmed him, made him forget the night and the fear.

'What about having a bit of a rest?' he asked, worried at what his comrades would reply.

But the question proved superfluous. The men were not anxious to leave the unexpected refuge too quickly.

The women came near to them. Their attitude was a mixture of pride and covetousness. Samaras understood and threw them some cigarettes which they caught in mid-air with lively, nimble movements.

'Not exactly strong on cleaning-up, eh, old grannies?' Samaras taunted them, pointing to the filthy straw mixed with goat's dung.

'That's because we're not here all the time,' said one of the old women. The strangely palsied movements of her head were in strong contrast to the solid steadiness of her legs. 'We go up into the mountains with the men, and then we shut the goats up here . . .'

'Be quiet, Smaro!' cried out the youngest of the women, crossly. 'You're a goose, a stupid goose!'

She turned to the men and tapped her forehead to show them that the other old woman was a bit crazy.

'Alright! alright!' Kolokouvaros chaffed her. 'We understand.' He winked. 'You're in contact with the *andartes*, and it was you who carried out the last attack on the police-station at Yanitza.'

The men once more spluttered with laughter.

'Marinakis,' said the sergeant, 'go and see the car and have a look round the hut. These old hags are potty, but you can never be sure! . . .' He shook the lapel of his jacket defiantly. 'And you, you old witches,' he said to the women this time, 'something to eat, and quick.'

'But we've nothing,' cried the women almost in chorus. 'We're poor,' added the youngest.

'Now then, no sabotage,' said Samaras angrily. 'You've got goats. There must at least be some milk!'

'Have to be milked . . .'

'Well, what are you waiting for? A kick on your old bottoms? Scram! And no funny business, or I'll give you a pair of wings! . . .'

The old women looked at each other, muttered a few incomprehensible words, made a great show of spitting out the tobacco they were chewing, and then the sixty-year-old went off, dragging her bare feet in the direction of the stable. Her elders took their stand round the stewpot again.

The men, half lying on the straw, fell silent with fatigue. A soft warmth covered them, the soup bubbled over the fire, they could hear the woman moving about in the stable. Marinakis came back from his look-round, threw down his weapon and stretched out by the others.

'It's beginning to freeze outside,' he said, rubbing his hands. 'It's good in here.'

'Yes, it's good in here,' said Samaras, sleepily.

'What about the Divisional General?' asked Dzavalas without much interest.

'To hell with him!' said Samaras, pulling his cap over his eyes. 'He can wait!'

They were quiet again, numbed by the warmth and the bubbling of the water boiling in the pot. The women watched it, bent before the fire

'I'm hungry,' said the sergeant after a while.

'I'm famished!' added Dzavalas.

'Marinakis, have a snoop round and see what that old witch is doing,' said Samaras. 'She's been gone years.'

Marinakis stretched out to his full length.

'Not me. I've done my turn, I'm not moving.'

'All right, all right,' said Dzavalas, making an effort to get to his feet.

At that moment, the door opened wide and a shrill, hoarse voice ordered, 'Hands up!'

The old woman was standing on the threshold grasping a large service pistol with her two trembling hands.

'What's the game,' growled Samaras, and instinctively his hand went towards the machine-gun which lay a short distance off.

'Hands up!' said the old woman again and fired.

Samaras heard the bullet whistle right past his ear, so he hurried to obey. His comrades had lifted their arms and their eyes were fixed on the pistol-barrel. The weapon, in the feeble, uncontrolled hands of the old woman had a particularly menacing look about it. It appeared to have a life of its own, ready to go off at any moment, obedient only to its own caprices.

'Smaro, Golfo! Pick those up for me!' ordered the old woman in her harsh voice. Her sisters, who were chuckling quietly by the fire, hobbled quickly over to the soldiers and took possession of their Tommy-guns.

'This'll please the lads,' said the old woman called Smaro. She nursed the weapons, which were too heavy for her arms, and took them over to the corner opposite the door. Joy made the spittle foam at the edges of her withered lips.

'Feel their pockets!' again ordered the sixty-year-old, who was following the men's movements with fierce concentration. The old women crept round behind the soldiers and their filthy hands ran swiftly over their clothes.

'Nothing here!' said Smaro.

'Right. Now take your clothes off,' the old woman ordered, addressing herself particularly to Samaras.

The men looked at one another, hesitating and uneasy.

'No, not that!' cried Kolokouvaros, with beseeching eyes.

'Go on, don't be afraid! We're old, can't you see!' said the woman, laughing. 'It's for our boys, they haven't a shirt to their backs. Hurry, be a bit quicker!' she added suddenly threatening. And a bullet crashed, seemingly by chance, in the chimney-breast over their heads.

Without further hesitation, the men carried out the order. Smaro and Golfo, seized with an attack of modesty, pulled a few strands of their thin grey hairs over their faces. That didn't stop them peeping

through the improvised veil as the men stripped, nor giving each other digs in the ribs and letting out bursts of laughter.

'You can keep that!' announced the old woman pointing to their underpants with the barrel of her revolver. The weapon weighed heavy in her hands.

'And now, get out, off with you, or I'll riddle you!' she shouted in a strident voice. 'And take care! Don't hang around here. We're waiting for our men and if they find you anywhere near . . .'

She drew back carefully, holding her weapon still at the ready, and leaving the entrance clear.

The men, heads bent, went one by one into the cold night, hair on end and teeth chattering.

(2) THE MAN FROM YANITCHAR

HE had been afraid of coming down in the olive groves. The parachute would have caught in the dead branches and a broken limb would have been almost a certainty. But the pilot had been right. The wind had been strong enough and had carried him towards the gentle slope which ran down the other side of the mountain above the village.

Leptos rapidly disentangled himself from the ropes, according to the technique which he had taken a long training to perfect, among many other things which are taught in the 'special brigade of parachutists of the U.S.A.'. The plane was still flying overhead, and now it passed in a daring bit of 'grass-cutting'. Leptos, on his feet, waved to the pilot to show that he was safe, and shouted a 'good luck' to him, which, of course, was drowned in the roar of the motors.

The plane circled once more and then disappeared. Leptos was alone. Alone to face the adventure which had brought him from New York across the seas almost to the village of his birth. He picked up his automatic rifle, his transmitting set, folded the silky material of the parachute and hid it behind the bushes, then he tried to work out where he was. He hardly recognised the places. He remembered which way to look for the sea, which side the olive-groves covered, waving and silvered in the old days, just like another sea, but now desolate, the trunks black and burnt. But the mountain whose every inch he had walked over, on donkey-back, or followed the wandering flocks, or all alone during his uneasy years of adolescence, now seemed strange and formidable. For an instant he thought of the skyscrapers in his suburb, thought of the busyness of the New York streets. And the thoughts seemed to protect him against 'Taygetus which crushed him with its overhanging presence, with the majestic stillness of its snow-capped peaks.

Leptos went on down towards the valley. Soon he caught sight of the village scattered on the side of the mountain. His heart contracted. It was there, in those mean huts, that he had been born, that he had grown up. It was so long ago . . . A life, several life-times, seemed to separate him from it. He began to hurry, following the path which ran alongside a stream and crossed the little pine-wood. Leaving the last thicket behind, he slithered down the steep slope, then suddenly stopped dead. There, near the bridge leading to the village, a group of men and women were closely watching his arrival. Poorly dressed, bare-headed, they stood silent and grave in front of the soldier in American uniform, who had stopped a few paces away from them.

Leptos, trying all the while to lean negligently on his weapon, desperately searched for a face he recognised, or for a sign of friendship. But the silence continued, and the peasants looked sullen and hostile. Leptos decided to speak first.

‘Don’t you recognise me, good people?’

A movement of surprise ran through the little group. They hadn’t expected the stranger to speak their language.

At last Leptos discovered an old shepherd with a deeply wrinkled face, his eyes burnt with trachoma.

‘Don’t you recognise me, grandpa Yanni?’ he tried again.

The old man blinked his reddened, half-closed eyes, but made no reply.

Suddenly a woman’s voice exclaimed, ‘It’s cousin Vassili, Leptos’ son, the one who went to America! . . .’

‘Yes, it’s me!’ the soldier cried happily.

Then everybody began to talk at once and the mountain-folk gathered round Leptos, the women kissed him, the children ran to hang on to his waist.

‘We didn’t know you were one of us, son!’ said one of the old men, giving him a slap on the shoulder. ‘We’ve seen so many people coming down from the skies when the Boches were here. And as the war is still going on, we have to be careful . . .’

Leptos smiled all over his face. He began to recognise the special accent of his own people, and, even though he suffered to see them—all more or less his near relations—in rags, their faces marked by misery, he felt a strange warmth at the touch of their hands, and he shook them again and again.

‘Come on, boy, come and have a drink!’ said the old man, who seemed the chief man of the village. He went ahead of the procession, with Leptos in the centre, jostled by the chattering women and the children and dogs jumping all round him.

After going down a muddy street, the old man stopped in front of a hut roofed with straw supported on the ruined walls of a house half-burned out. The old man’s face darkened, ‘This is the third time in the last ten years,’ he said pointing to the ruins. ‘I won’t build it again . . .’

Leptos nodded his head. He had been in the fighting in Germany.

He had seen entire towns wiped off the face of the earth. One peasant cottage reduced to ashes, it wasn't very impressive. But he felt the wretchedness which would have been his fate if he hadn't gone to America as a boy.

'Holy Jeez! You're certainly poor!' he said as he followed the old man into his shanty.

He sat down on a stool cut with an axe and drank the jug full of *ouzo* which the old man handed to him.

'He's our mayor,' said one of the men with naïve pride, pointing to the old man. 'He's very wise . . .'

'Yes, indeed, we are poor . . .'

 sighed the mayor. 'Since they've killed our flocks and burnt our olives . . .'

'Who is *they*?' asked Leptos.

The old man made a vague gesture. Leptos couldn't get rid of the thought which obsessed him . . . my God, he'd escaped something . . . Supposing . . . yes . . . In spite of his sadness, he exulted. He looked at the lined, bearded faces of the men, at the women who stood bare-footed by the door, at the snotty children, covered with mud.

'God almighty, but you're poor!' he couldn't help saying again.

The old man sighed once more. 'It's the olives,' he said, 'the olives. They take six years to grow again.'

'Yes, well,' said Leptos, 'America's a fine place after all . . .'

'As fine as that?' asked one of the men.

'I'll say,' cried Leptos. 'Houses like mountains, motor-cars covering the roads, lights everywhere and bars . . . I mean taverns . . .'

The men slapped their knees with enthusiasm.

'Hear that?' they exclaimed, looking at one another. 'Houses like mountains . . .'

'And you, you have a house like that too?' asked the mayor, full of respect.

'Me?' cried Leptos, taken aback. 'Not me, they're for the rich . . .'

'Oh!' the men murmured disappointedly. 'Then you're not rich?'

'But you've got a motor-car all the same . . . haven't you?' the mayor asked further, full of hope. 'They say everyone has a motor-car in America . . .'

'Er—well,' replied the embarrassed Leptos. 'You see, I wash dishes . . . you know . . . plates and jugs like this. And then, you can pick up quite a bit in America, but as for a car . . . All the same, since I've been in the army,' he rushed on quickly, 'I've got everything I want! I've got a car and cigarettes and chocolate. Here, wait,' he cried. He searched through his pack, and, bringing out little objects wrapped in brilliant tinfoil, he handed them round to the children.

The children stretched out their dirty little paws, undid the packages, and, throwing their contents away, seized the silver paper with happy shouts.

'But you eat it!' exclaimed Leptos, roaring with laughter. 'It's good!' and he pushed a piece of chocolate into a little girl's mouth. Then the uproar increased. The children, on all-fours, fought for the

pieces of chocolate with the dogs who joined madly in the chase, the men laughing and the women screaming.

Warmed by the strong drink, Leptos felt young, strong, generous. 'Oh, my friends!' he cried. 'America, it's a great place! Hey, wait a minute!' he went on, suddenly getting an idea. He bent down, took his wireless on to his knees, manipulated the controls, and jazz music filled the room.

The frightened children screamed, the dogs fled howling, the women whispered prayers and crossed themselves. And, in the middle of this infernal row, Leptos wriggled like a madman, waving his arms and tapping his feet to the rhythm of a crazy piece of swing.

When Leptos had finished his dance, the mayor shouted for a chance to speak.

'And what are you here for, my son?'

Leptos, sweating from the dance, mopped his neck with his handkerchief and turned off the radio.

'Oh!' he replied, 'it's a long story . . . we're here to fight the rebels . . . the bandits, the looters . . .'

Hardly had he pronounced these last words, when the noise stopped as if by magic. Astonished, Leptos spat out his chewing-gum and looked around. The men had not moved from their places, but their faces were as hard as marble. The women had disappeared without trace, only the children remained, in the doorway, dumb, staring at him with their huge and infinitely-grave eyes.

'Look, good people,' he said loudly, 'it's not possible. . . . You're my own folk, it's not possible! . . .'

He waited in vain for a reply. The mayor was looking into the distance, right through him, with an old man's angry eyes; the other villagers went on smoking, motionless and impassive. The silence could be felt. The only sound was the whining of a dog, one of those who, muzzle on paws, were curled up at the feet of the children.

Leptos felt the blood rush to his face. He now clearly recalled his mission. The General Staff wanted information. They had parachuted him close to his village to recruit from among his relatives and friends some safe men who knew the mountains and the movements of the rebels. But damned if he'd expected this! What? His fellow villagers, his own folk, receiving him like this? He was seized with anger and shame, and his hand clutched the revolver-holster. He burst out, 'So, you're all bandits too, the whole bunch! Not one honest man among you, not one to back me up, me, your brother, who's come to free you from the red criminals, the bandits, the killers and looters!'

With sullen, obstinate looks, the men cleared their throats, but not one opened his mouth. The silence was thick, palpable.

Then from the crowd of kids, a little boy came forward, and on the corner of the table in front of Leptos, he put a bit of chocolate almost melted away. Another little boy did the same. A little girl hesitated a moment before putting down her bit of silver paper, the others followed, until the very smallest, pushed by the bigger ones, seriously

placed on the table the half-sucked chocolate covered with mud, and the tinfoil.

Leptos stared with horror at the pitiful little pile which grew in front of him, then abruptly, as he if he had become afraid, he swung his pack hastily on his back and, taking care not to tread on the children's bare feet, he fled.

Federico Garcia Lorca

CRY TO ROME

(From the tower of the Chrysler Building)

Apples delicately wounded
by fine rapiers of silver,
clouds torn by a hand of coral
which carries on its back a kernel of fire,
fishes of arsenic like sharks,
sharks like drops of a lament to blind a multitude,
roses which wound
and needles thrust into the bloodstream,
enemy worlds and loves covered with worms
will pour over you. Will pour over the great dome
which the military tongues anoint with oil
where a man urinates on a shining dove
and spits coal dust
in the midst of thousands of spires.

For now there is no-one who gives bread or wine,
no-one who plants grass in the mouth of death,
nor who will spread the sails of repose,
nor who will weep for the wounds of the elephants.
There is nothing but a million blacksmiths
forging chains for the children yet unborn.
There is nothing but a million carpenters
who make coffins without a cross.
There is nothing but a mob of laments
which bare their breasts awaiting the bullets of death.
The man who despises the dove should speak;
he should shout naked among the columns,
and inject himself with the virus of leprosy
and weep a lament so terrible

that it might melt his rings and his diamond telephones.
But the man dressed in white
knows nothing of the mystery of germination,
knows nothing of the woman's parturient groan;
he knows not that Christ can still give water,
nor that the base coin burns the extravagant kiss
and gives the blood of the lamb to the idiot beak of the pheasant.

The masters teach the children
of a marvellous light that flows from the mountain;
but all that flows is a merging of sewers
where shout the dark nymphs of fury.
The masters point with devotion to the enormous fumigated domes;
but there is no love beneath the statues,
there is no love beneath the eyes of definitive crystal.
Love is to be found in flesh lacerated by thirst,
in the tiny cabin which fights against the flood;
love is in the ditches where the serpents of hunger fight,
in the sad sea which rocks the corpses of the seagulls
and in the dark pungent kiss beneath the pillows.
But the old man with translucent hands
will say: Love, love, love,
acclaimed by millions of moribunds;
will say: Love, love, love,
among the shimmering tinsel of pathos;
will say: Peace, peace, peace,
among the clatter of knives and melons of dynamite;
will say: Love, love, love,
till his lips are turned to silver.

But meanwhile, Ah, yes! meanwhile,
the negroes who clean out the spittoons,
the boys who tremble before the pale terrors of the directors,
the women drowned in mineral oils,
the multitude of hammer, of violin or of cloud,
must shout till their brains shatter on the walls,
must shout in front of the great domes,
shout with a madness of fire,
shout with a madness of snow,
shout with their heads filled with excrement,
shout like an infinity of nights,
shout with such challenging voice
that the cities may tremble like girls
and smash the prisons of oil and music,
for we want our daily bread,
alder blossom and grain of evergreen tenderness,
for we want to see the Earth's fulfilment
giving its fruits for all.

(Translated from the Spanish by George Leeson.)

FIVE U.S.A. POETS

David Ignatow

LONG ISLAND TREK

The men who move to the suburbs
in search of peace will find the shrubbery
filled with stray dogs. At home
their wives will feed them faults
of the neighbour's children, and the envied
high cost of whose furniture. They will
relax with a scare headline in coal
or steel or atom bomb, and go to bed
mumbling of the early hour to rise.
Oh yes, they have the television now;
everything that dreams can do
they will have seen. Oh lovely clown
and witty burlesque queen trembling
filmily at silent eyes. Mornings salesmen
and production man will run
into the nearest house when the rain
starts in the open before the train,
and be confused, a stranger, by small talk.
This they will leave, peace of new, slender
trees, and hurry on to the shrewd
sharp city awaiting them.

New York.

Jed Garrick

(1) PONTIFICAL

The Bishop came to Middleton
halfway across the moon;
he peddled immortality
out of a silver spoon.
We kissed the ring and holiness
we swallowed like a pill,
we laid the girls of Middleton
and we were holy still.
Now at the unregenerate
our sharpest stones we fling;
what right have they to kiss the girls,
who never kissed the ring?

(2) BLACK SWAN

Out of the shallow dissonance
of my bewilderments,
punctuated by the asterisks of stars,
the parenthesis of wasted moons
and the exploding atom of the sun
swims the black swan of oblivion
holding dead cities in his eyes.

California.

S. E. Laurila

THE CONFSSIONAL

Prying into your secret thoughts
as the clumsy bull tramps the garden
they claim all
and leave nothing for your own.
Turning over the soil of your spirit
to the harsh draughts of inquisition
to make sure you have kept nothing for yourself.
Picking over and examining all the corners
to see that you do not hide any of yourself.
Scrounging for the small winking seeds
of individuality
that might burst into rebellion.
Coldly strangling the green shoots
that might have sprouted into self.
Who confesses the confessor?
Where does he take your seeds of sin?
Does he rifle them
and count them in the dark of night
his jealousy shining on them?

California.

Michael Wolf

THIS IS THE WORLD THEY GAVE US

This is the world they gave us, the terrible monster-men,
Clanking their blood-tipped swords and mouthing their oily lies,
When to speak of peace is treason, and to know that never again
The earth shall be free from the terror that streaks through the splin-
tered skies.

This is the world they gave us, the world that we let them give,
Trapped in their webbed semantics that turned us against our own,
Wrapped in their great, round phrases where war is a bottomless seive,
That scatters the seeds of hatred wherever the winds are blown.

This is the world they gave us, never to wake in the dawn,
And know that the world turns safely in its orbit as of old,
Never to know what moment it will hurtle through space and on,
On through the swallowing spaces, uncharted and charred, and cold.

This is the world they gave us, to look on your manliest one,
And never to know what moment they may claim his blood and brain,
Never to love him too dearly, since only from sun to sun
You may hold him close to your heart-beat . . . better to dull the pain.

This is the world they gave us, never again to know
The swift bright shock of beauty, where the river of song flows deep,
Only the drums of the jungle, only the atom-glow . . .
This is the world they gave us, while our minds were fast asleep.

New York.

Jackson MacLow

(1) THE ICE-FURNACE

My bride of a second ago, my love
of then, of then, of then (O then!):
this is the furnace where nothings thrive
(O then!) in a fire of ice—listen!

Icy fires enforce us now
(my love of a second ago, my bride!)
where everythings to nothings grow
our we is wasting away—Wait! Wait!

This is the furnace we built ourselves,
this is the fire our hands have set—
in a weather of longing, cruel as a grave,
our universe we uncreate—

O desperate coldness kindled in want—
—my love, my bride of now, of now!—
what idiot stratagem we invent!
—let us leap from it now, leap now, O now!

(2) I HEARD A VOICE

I heard a voice that cried out 'Courage! Courage!'
The voice was mine;—it was not my own,
not *only* mine, crying 'Courage! Courage!'
a very present help not *only* mine.

'Persevere but do not strive,' it cried
(this was the voice that cried out 'Courage! Courage!')
'Continue on the way, but stay! You need
but persevere: therein is Courage! Courage!'

I heard a voice that cried. The voice was mine.
It was not *only* mine. Cried 'Courage! Courage!
Relax that stringent only will, give in
to joy!' Then flooded me such Courage! Courage!

New York.

Jan Kott

THE PHILOSOPHICAL JOURNEY

Undoubtedly philosophers are in the right when they tell us that nothing is great or little otherwise than by comparison. It might have pleased fortune to let the Lilliputians find some nation where the people were as diminutive with respect to them as they were to me. And who knows but that even this prodigious race of mortals might be equally overmatched in some distant part of the world, whereof we have yet no discovery?

Swift: GULLIVER'S TRAVELS.

TO what literary genre does *Gulliver's Travels* belong? Is it a novel of action or its parody? A romance of adventure or a satire on romances of adventure? An allegory, a social Utopia or a sneer at social Utopias? Is it a political pamphlet, a bitter joke, or a political treatise? What is the secret of this extraordinary realism, which peoples the world with men as small as a finger and giants as big as an oak tree? Which creates an island rising in the air, a state of wise horses, a race of immortals, and, at the same time, draws with frightening clearness the laws of social behaviour, lays great historical conflicts bare, and depicts the hopes and illusions of a century?

What is the philosophical tale, seemingly scoffing at all rules, and yet, at the same time, so classical in its language and composition, so rational in its style, in its vision of the world? It is the literary expression of one of the greatest spiritual upheavals in the history of Europe; it encompasses everything: philosophy, economics, physics; it makes real persons, called by their surnames and Christian names, as well as the good savages from the South Sea Islands discourse; it comments on the society scandals of yesterday; sneers at the Bible; discusses the system of taxation; enters into polemics with Leibniz. It does not narrate, but demonstrates; it does not describe, but ridicules; it uses as willingly, to prove an argument, the theory that matter is built of cells as Trembley's observations on the multiplication of the polypus, or statistics, contemporary anecdotes, and the wise laws of the Chinese. There is not a literary form less disinterested. The philosophical tale is always a pamphlet, a libel, a satire, an accusation and a challenge. All the literary technique, all the intellectual and social experience, are used for one purpose only: political struggle. The philosophical tale separates the classical age from the age of the novel. The great writers of the classical age had tried to find in human nature all that is universal and transcendental; to show ideal models of passions, and conflicts clear of all accidents, places, time and circumstances. The novel was to become a mirror, carried about the highways of the world, which would reflect the destiny, grimaces and disguises of man. The philosophical tale was the literature of the

transition period—a clear, crystalline and abstract picture of the Age of Enlightenment.

Cartesianism was the school of intellectual psychology. It taught that man is 'a substance, the reality of which is created by its thinking'. The Cartesian man was outside history. But from Cartesianism, after the rejection of its metaphysics, remained the method. The method was used for the exploration of the material world. The philosophical tale was the geometrical analysis of social behaviour, the geometrical analysis of history. It was Cartesian in its method, empirical in its contents. Fontenelle, the great populariser of Cartesianism, one of the most typical representatives of the intellectual upheaval of his times, wrote in his treatise *On the Usefulness of Mathematical and Physical Sciences*:

The spirit of geometry is not so far bound up with geometry as to make its separation from the latter, and application to other sciences, impossible. A work on morals, politics, criticism and, perhaps, even on eloquence, will become more beautiful, if executed by the hand of a geometrician. Order, clearness, conciseness, accuracy, which have lately prevailed in good books, have certainly their origins in that spirit of geometry, which is spreading more than ever, and is mastering in some way even those people who are not acquainted with it. At times one great man sets the fashion for a whole century; the man, who most deservedly merits to be recognised as having established the new art of thinking, was a splendid geometrician.

In accordance with the spirit of geometry, Descartes taught in his *Discours de la Méthode* how to deduct truths 'from the seeds, which naturally dwell in our souls', how to explain all natural phenomena, i.e., 'the skies, stars, the earth, and even the waters, iron, minerals' and many other things, which, being the most common and least complicated, are easiest to understand. The geometrical spirit was not only a method of thinking, but also a philosophy; it did not only explain, but also created a picture of the world. The geometrical spirit proved that nature, and consequently also human nature, is always and everywhere the same, that it is ruled by laws which we can deduct from primary causes, and that 'nothing is great or little otherwise than by comparison'.

Leibniz was the first to observe that nobody would have noticed if the earth had increased in size tenfold together with everything it contains and is surrounded by, and he created a universe composed of an infinite number of ever bigger and bigger monads. The same image of the world was presented by the theory of preformation. The naturalists saw through a microscope in the sperm or in the egg (stubborn arguments went on about this) a small and wrinkled shape of a ready and completely formed animal. This little animal had inside it sperm or eggs, in which even smaller, but quite finished animals, carried in themselves the seeds of all the generations to come to the end of the world. Thus the natural history of the species was like a large wooden egg that children like to play with, and which

contains inside, placed in each other, ever smaller and smaller coloured eggs.

A beautiful example of this geometrical conception of the universe is furnished by the famous passage by Pascal dealing with the little worm called the tick:

If man wants to watch another world, equally marvellous, let him explore the one that he knows to be the smallest. Let the tick show him in the smallness of its body parts incomparably smaller, little legs with their joints, the veins in these little legs, blood in these veins, humours in this blood, drops in these humours, vapours in these drops; let understanding, when he is dividing these last things, exhaust his strength, and let the last object, which he has reached, become the subject of our reasoning. He may reflect, perhaps, that here is the limit of nature's smallness. I want to show him a new abyss in it. I want to paint for him not only the visible world, but also the immensity of nature, which we can reason to exist inside this miniature of an atom. I want him to perceive in it the infinity of worlds, each of which has its own firmament, its planets, its earth, in the same proportions as the visible world; on this earth animals and finally ticks, in which we will rediscover the same ticks as he has discovered in the first ones, and having found in them again the same things, without end and rest, let him lose himself in these marvels equally astounding in their littleness as others are in their immensity. For how can we not marvel at the fact that our body, which has only recently been an imperceptible point in the universe, imperceptible again in the womb of everything, has now become a colossus, a world or rather everything in face of the void, which we cannot perceive. . . .

In the kingdom of the Lilliputians Gulliver had 'been much pleased with observing a cook pulling a lark, which was not so large as a common fly, and a young girl threading an invisible needle with invisible silk'. People, animals and plants preserved in that country perfect proportions. The largest horses and oxen were four or five inches high, the rams an inch and a half, and the geese were as big as sparrows. It is true that Gulliver could not notice the insects, but 'nature hath adapted the eyes of the Lilliputians to all objects proper for their view: they see with great exactness. . . .' In the state of the Giants the cats were as large as our oxen, the mongrels four times bigger than our elephants, and the rats, which almost killed poor Gulliver, were the size of our biggest mastiffs.

Rabelais had told us already of the wars of giants. Swift, a devoted reader of Pantagruel's adventures, borrowed many a ribald joke from the curate of Meudon. But while Rabelais, with the joyful laughter of the Renaissance, exaggerates the might of man, and, equally inexhaustible in inventing new words as in imagining new adventures, cares not for probability and scoffs at sizes, Swift builds his imaginary kingdoms as exactly as a geometrician, with a cold sneer calculates the proportions and, like Balzac, who never forgets to tell us the revenues of his heroes, and describe the furniture in their houses, he

scrupulously notes, in *Gulliver's Travels*, the sizes of men, animals and objects.

The Lilliputians are exactly twelve times smaller than Gulliver, and the kingdom of Brobdingnag is created according to the same proportions. In the Act of Release, which Gulliver signs, the emperor of Lilliput undertakes to provide him with as much food and drink as would suffice for 1,724 of his little subjects. The emperor's mathematicians had arrived at the figure almost without making a mistake. To be quite accurate, it should have been 1,728 ($12 \times 12 \times 12$). Besides, such is the figure given in the later editions of *Gulliver's Travels*. Gulliver complained of lack of comfort when sleeping on a quadruple mattress, each layer of which made of one hundred and fifty Lilliputian mattresses. He was right: he should have had a mattress made of twelve layers. In the country of the Giants, poor Gulliver was cruelly hit by hailstones. And no wonder, since after he had measured and weighed a hailstone, he found that it was eighteen hundred times bigger than a European hailstone. Swift's geometrical Utopia is built with such diabolical consistency and is so plastic in its design, that after having accepted its initial premisses we are not only prepared to believe in all Gulliver's adventures, but we actually see the kingdoms of Lilliput and Brobdingnag.

We should therefore not be surprised at that old English gentleman who, according to a contemporary story, looked for the state of Lilliput on the map; nor at the simple mariner who confessed to one of Swift's friends that he had known Captain Gulliver very well indeed, but that he had lived at Wapping and not Redriff; nor, finally, at the authentic Catholic prelate from Ireland who, after serious consideration, found it necessary to warn one of the Roman Congregations that not everything reported by Gulliver must be looked upon as truth.

We should therefore be all the less surprised to learn that during Swift's lifetime there were doctors who believed in the existence of dwarfs and giants. It is true that already in 1699 Edward Tyson, the much-esteemed philologist of Cambridge University, had submitted to a very thorough criticism all information about Pigmies to be found in the writings of the authors of antiquity, and had stated authoritatively that a race of little men had never existed, and that 'it is a sheer invention of the brain, caused by an overheated imagination'. But twenty-five years later, i.e. two years before the appearance of *Gulliver's Travels*, Tyson was refuted in the proceedings of the Académie des Belles Lettres by the priest Banier, a great scientific authority, who proved that Pigmies did exist, and that 'Aristotle's statements are more serious than the suppositions of contemporary philosophers'. A little earlier another French scholar, Nicolas Hannon, had presented to the Académie Royale des Inscriptions a treatise with the unusual title of *A Chronological Ladder of Human Size Since the Creation of the World until the Birth of Jesus Christ*. In this work he stated indubitably that Adam's height was exactly 123 feet 9 inches, Eve's 118 feet 9.3 inches and Noah's 103 feet 9 inches.

Abraham's height was not stated quite so accurately: the patriarch was either 27 or 28 feet tall, while Moses was only a thirteen-footer, and Hercules a mere ten-footer.

It is quite possible that Swift had known Henrion's treatise and had made fun of it, but the tribes of Lilliputians and Giants did not originate in ancient myths and medieval tales. The Lilliputians and Giants were begotten by Cartesianism. And nothing proves better the philosophical sources of this geometrical utopia than the conviction, shared by Swift alike with his epoch, that while proportionately changing the size of a body, its characteristics could be preserved unchanged. This is wrong. If, in the country of Brobdingnag, the giants had been made in our image, they could not have moved about, not even got up from the ground, for their bones would not have been capable of supporting their huge bodies. When we read that poor Gulliver is fighting in the country of the Giants with wasps as large as our partridges, we forget that wasps of that size, in order to be able to fly, would need wings of quite different proportions, and bodies of an entirely different structure. A flea of the size of an elephant could never jump. Moreover, if the water in the country of the Lilliputians had had the some properties as ours, the poor manikins would have suffered very much because of their capillary vessels. No literary historian has ever paid attention to these errors of Swift, and they were first pointed out by Emil Meyerson, the historian of the development of chemistry and physics, and one of the most outstanding conventional theorists of science.

Swift's mistake was not, however, accidental. The geometrical Utopia is not merely an artistic trick, but also a philosophy. The geometrical Utopia states that human nature is always and everywhere the same, that small and large exist only by comparison. And it does not deal with just physical smallness and bigness. The world, seen in turns through either end of a spying-glass, exposes all its misery, cruelty and stupidity. Reduction and enlargement are simultaneously an artistic means and a weapon of satire. They permit us to look with fresh eyes at phenomena, laws and customs, to which our sight has grown so used that it does not notice their monstrosities. They either beget mockery or horrify.

The geometrical Utopia turns into a scathing political satire. The island of Lilliput is England, the kingdom of Blefuscu is France. The fractions of the Big-endians and Small-endians, which have been fighting each other for three generations as to which end of an egg should be eaten first, represent the Catholics and the Protestants. The party of Tramecksan or High Heels (so-called because of their high-heeled shoes) represents the Church of England. The Low Heels represent the Presbyterians. Other commentators see in the two parties the equivalents of the Whigs and Tories. The heir to the throne, who hobbles as he walks, because one of his heels is higher than the other, depicts the Prince of Wales, later King George the Second, who wavered for a long time in his political and religious sympathies. The coloured ribbons, which the Lilliputian lords receive as rewards for

dexterous crawling underneath a stick held by the Prime Minister, are, to conclude, an allusion to the new orders established by Walpole.

Swift's contemporaries found it amusing to decipher the voyage to Lilliput. But this is only the innocent beginning of the satire. It goes further and deeper, it outgrows the topical political pamphlet, reaches beyond quips at the unrighteousness of a single kingdom. The state of Lilliput is England, but not England alone. 'The same vices and the same follies rule everywhere, at least in all the civilised countries of Europe,' Swift wrote to Desfontaine. 'An author who writes only for one city, one province, one kingdom, or even for only one century, does not deserve to be translated even as he does not deserve to be read.'

Gulliver's voyage to Lilliput is a cruel gibe at court society. The secrets of higher policy, contemporary political and religious disputes, wars of conquest, the pursuit after honours, the court hierarchy, social classes and ranks become ridiculous through their littleness. An absolute monarch that is not bigger than a field-mouse becomes a funny figure. The dying feudalism does not cease to be cruel, but it becomes ridiculous. And therefore Swift made his voyage to Lilliput, and not his voyage to the country of the Giants, into a satire on feudalism.

I admire Swift's artistry and wisdom. Greatness and littleness exist only by comparison. The spying-glass has been turned upside down. Gulliver, who was a giant among the Lilliputians, is now a Lilliputian among the Giants. And it is only now that all the raillery, in which Swift encompasses the people of the dwarfs, hits the human species. Previously Gulliver scoffed at the Lilliputians and, as a rationalistic philosopher, watched the miserable, stupid and greedy dwarfs, but now the rationalistic giants scoff at him. The littleness of the Lilliputians has become the littleness of man.

But, I confess, that after I had been a little too copious in talking of my own beloved country, of our trade, and wars by sea and land, of our schisms in religion, and parties in the State; the prejudices of his education prevailed so far, that he (the king of Brobdingnag) could not forbear taking me up in his right hand, and stroking me gently with the other, after a hearty fit of laughing, asked me whether I were a Whig or Tory. Then turning to his first minister, who waited behind him with a white staff, near as tall as the main-mast of the *Royal Sovereign*; he observed how contemptible a thing was human grandeur, which could be mimicked by such diminutive insects as I: 'and yet,' said he, 'I dare engage, these creatures have their titles, and distinctions of honour, they contrive little nests and burrows, that they call houses and cities; they make a figure in dress and equipage; they love, they fight, they dispute, they cheat, they betray.'

How good-natured and mild Voltaire appears when compared with Swift's cold hatred! When Micromégas, the inhabitant of Sirius, found himself on our globe and lifted on one of his fingernails a ship with all her crew, he was surprised to find out that the invisible

insects had managed to measure his size with the aid of a quadrant. 'Oh intelligent atoms,' Micromégas called out, 'in whom it has pleased the Eternal Being to prove its abilities and might.' Thus, Swift's bitterness was changed into an apology for human intelligence by the pen of the bourgeois reformer of feudal France.

Of all Gulliver's adventures his voyage to the kingdom of Brobdingnag is, however, the least pessimistic. It still contains delusions, hopes, illusions. It is not only a satire, but a chapter of Utopia about a king who is a philosopher, and about enlightened absolutism. 'He confined the knowledge of governing,' Gulliver relates with astonishment, 'within very narrow bounds, to common sense and reason, to justice and lenity, to the speedy determination of civil and criminal causes, with some other obvious topics, which are not worth considering.'

The enlightened giant on the throne believes in progress and repeats after the bourgeois philosophers '... that whoever could make two ears of corn, or two blades of grass, grow upon a spot of ground where only one grew before, would deserve better of mankind, and do more essential service to his country, than the whole race of politicians put together.'

But only one chapter has remained of the Utopia. The pamphlet begins again. Swift, with the genuine artistic consciousness of a genius, knew how to apply optical laws to the requirements of satire. Littleness provokes laughter and gibes, hugeness provokes terror and horror. The Englishman of the beginning of the century was derided in Gulliver's person, and in the persons of the giants it was human nature itself that suffered a similar fate. The satire no longer hits out at social organisations and institutions, at the social conditions of man, but penetrates to his physical shape, shows his ugliness, abomination, the monstrosity of his natural functions.

Swift becomes pitiless. With what grim, almost anatomical fury, he watches, as though through a microscope, the human body and points out its revolting ugliness. Nothing can escape such a sight. In the first place feminine beauty is made to look monstrous. Gulliver watches the queen's Maids of Honour:

For they would strip themselves to the skin, and put on their smocks in my presence, while I was placed on their toilet directly before their naked bodies, which, I am sure, to me was very far from being a tempting sight, or from giving me any other emotions than those of horror and disgust. Their skins appeared so coarse and uneven, so variously coloured, when I saw them near, with a mole here and there as broad as a trencher, and hairs hanging from it thicker than pack-threads, to say nothing further concerning the rest of their persons. Neither did they at all scruple, while I was by, to discharge what they had drunk, to the quantity of at least two hogsheds, in a vessel that held above three tuns.

Love, eating, and all natural functions, shapes, smells and sounds become magnified as in some nightmare in order to demonstrate

all the foulness of the king of creation. There is some rationalistic surrealism in it, in face of which Lautréamont's visions fade away; there is in it some cruel revenge taken on the poetry of classicism, on the refined taste of higher society.

But the most horrible of all is the picture of beggars in the capital of the kingdom, in the great city of Lorbrulgrud, who are covered with lice that possess muzzles as big as hogs' snouts. This picture can be compared only with Goya's canvasses. 'There was a woman with a cancer in her breast, swelled to a monstrous size, full of holes, in two or three of which I could have easily crept, and covered my whole body. There was a fellow with a wen in his neck, larger than five wool-packs, and another with a couple of wooden legs, each about twenty foot high.' Thus look the beggars in the state whose throne is occupied by an enlightened giant.

We have read through two voyages of this great book. And if we call it a book of hate, we must not forget that there are periods in which hatred is the only attitude a humanist can adopt. In Gulliver's voyage to Lilliput, Swift showed us the misery of human greatness; in Gulliver's voyage to the country of the Giants he showed us the greatness of human misery.

(Jan Kott's *School of the Classics*, published in 1949 by Czytelnik Publishing House in Warsaw, has been inspired by Marx's famous words: *The difficulty consists not in understanding that Greek art and the Greek epic are bound with definite forms of social developments. The difficulty consists in understanding why they continue in providing us with artistic pleasure and, in a certain sense, still preserve the importance of a yardstick and unattainable model.* Jan Kott has written his book of essays in order to help the contemporary Polish writers groping towards the creation of works imbued with socialist realism. His essays take them to the sources and creators of the great works of young bourgeois realism: Defoe, Swift, Prévost, Diderot, Balzac, Stendhal and Dickens. The essay on *Gulliver's Travels*, printed here, is the second of the three devoted to Swift.)

(Note by translator: R. Ainsztein.)

Jack Lindsay

SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE (I)

THERE are many reasons why it is important to understand today Coleridge's achievement, in all its strengths and weaknesses. He stands at the climax of the most vital trends of thought in our 18th century, and alone succeeds in drawing them to their logical conclusion in a dialectical conception of life and art. He alone of English thinkers, drawing on the national tradition in thought, achieves a dialectic, which has close affinities with Hegel's; his best poems similarly bring together in concentrated form a whole rich line of poetic struggle, in which imagery of transformation is worked out.

I propose here, then, to deal with his work in four sections. Firstly, his thought; secondly, his use of light-imagery; thirdly, his concept of Hope; and finally the group of 1797-8 poems in which he makes his central poetic statement.

THE key-struggle of thought in the 18th century is waged round the *Association Theory*. Locke, the philosophic counterpart of Newtonian mechanism, had defined spiritual process as starting from a blank white and building up, unit by unit, a complex mass of associations out of sensory material. Like the Newtonian mechanism itself, this work had the great merit of clearing away a vast amount of theological and other lumber; it gave a necessary starting-point for the new advance. But the advance itself could only come about through a fierce conflict inside the Lockean concepts—a conflict seeking to grasp what was the integrative and organic factor in the mechanically-increased total of sense-impressions and resultant ideas (born of combinations, separations and re-combinations). And just as the Newton-Locke universe rested on the political settlement of 1688, on the class-balance which had then been consolidated and set out as eternal, so the thinkers who fought to grasp an integrative movement in life and thought expressed the aspirations of classes excluded from, or dissatisfied with, the 1688 settlement. The first great attack comes (not with Berkeley or Hume, important as their dissident positions are) but with David Hartley, representing the small-producer evangelic element especially strong in the North. He works inside the Association Theory, but seeks to give it a cohesive social basis, to make it prove that Men are Perfectible and that Society is moving towards a level where the present discords can and will be overcome. His work was carried on by thinkers like Priestley, in whom the emerging concepts of chemistry, the evangelic fervour, and a simple revolutionary passion (for a total renovation), all coalesced round the notion of Human Perfectibility. This line in turn led to Godwin, in whom the rationalist element dominated over the evangelic.

Coleridge found his basic release through Hartley and Priestley;

and when the French Revolution began developing its inner contradictions as a bourgeois revolution, he devised with Southey the Pantisocratic Scheme for following Priestley to the Susquehanna, to found a utopian communistic group in the New World. The failure of this scheme, the increasing contradictions of the world-situation, and the desperate attempts that he went on making to discover the flaw, led him by March, 1801, to tell Poole that he had 'overthrown' Hartley's doctrine of Association.

This overthrow meant in part a retreat; but also in part an advance to a fuller concept of process. Not so much an abandonment of the idea of Perfectibility in the forms taken from Hartley to Godwin, as an effort to grasp the dialectical principle of growth which Hartley had intuited but failed to define.

In *Anima Poetae* he wrote, 'Socinianism, moonlight; methodism, the stove. O for some sun to unite heat and light.' He sees the more abstract rationalising attitudes of the Perfectibility-school as isolated from the mass-aspiration expressed in Methodism. This split means that the utopian rationalists lack the heat to move things, while the masses aspiring to a millenary world lack the light of theoretical understanding which would enable them to put their hopes into political action.

In calling Socinianism *moonlight* he is reviving the spell of Priestley. At the time when Priestley was being hounded out of England, he wrote a sonnet in which Priestley appears as the Moon:

Though, roused by that dark Vizir, Riot rude
Hath driven our Priestley o'er the Ocean swell;
Though Superstition and her wolfish brood
Bay the mild radiance, impotent and fell;
Calm in his halls of brightness he shall dwell. . . .

He ends by comparing Priestley's scientific mastery over Nature to Moonlight drawing 'meek Nature' from her 'dark retreat', so that she 'slowly lifts her Matron veil'. The moonrise-transformation is given a sexual connotation (as by Keats), and expresses the harmony which the existing world denies and would like to prevent.¹

In April, 1798, around the time when he was making the decisive reorientations away from the mechanist element in the Hartley-Priestley synthesis, he wrote:

I devote myself to such tasks as encroach not on the anti-social passions—in poetry to elevate the imagination and set the affections the right tune by the presence of life—in prose to the seeking . . . with patience . . . what our faculties are and what they are capable

¹ See Willey, *18th cent. Background*, 191. In *Religious Musings* (Dec., 1794) C. calls Priestley 'patriot, saint, and sage', driven from his homeland by 'Statesmen blood-stained and priests idolatrous'. C. called his firstborn Hartley, and was deeply stirred by the act of lifting the baby to the Moon for comfort: J. D. Campbell, *S.T.C.*, 456; *Poems* (1912), i, 226; *Letters*, i, 342, 323. (Cf. Wordsworth, *Evening Voluntaries*, xiii, lines 17-20.) For C.'s scrutinies of Sky and Moon: Lowes, *Road to Xanadu*, 171.

of becoming. I love fields and woods and mountains with almost a visionary fondness.²

And he burns with desire to impart this development to others. What then does he find in his quest for a fuller outlook which will unite light and heat, theoretical understanding and mass-aspiration?

Though influenced in his later phases by German thinkers, Coleridge's ideas come basically from the stream of 18th century English thought.³ What he does is to lift to a new level of coherence and concentration the dissident strains which embrace Erasmus Darwin with his notions of evolutionary organism as well as Hartley, evangelists as well as experimenters with gas and heat, radical perfectionists like Payne Knight as well as idealists like Berkeley who sought an Active Principle. He strives on the one hand to describe the richness and complexity of experience, to realise the associative process from a more vital aspect than Hartleian psychology. To break down the mechanist notion of units variously combined and built up, he stresses the aspect of *flow* and *depth*; he seeks to see the individual movement as part of a larger process. 'The streamy nature of association; which thinking curbs and rudders.' He calls mental process 'reverie-ish and streamy', and follows the lead given by the romantic dissidents since the Wartons, and broadened violently in its social basis by the Gothic Novel with its emphasis on 'fettered energies'. Reverie is opposed to logic as a form in which the sense of potentiality, the first embryonic patterns of the new, rise into consciousness: logic being taken as the rigid form of adaptation to existing society, to a repetitive round where no real change is possible or permitted. Coleridge adds a new colouration to these positions by an increasing stress on organic formative elements.⁴

Cowper, for instance, evokes the shapes of reverie seen in fire and smoke on the hearth; Coleridge in *Frost at Midnight* amplifies:

Only that film, which fluttered on the grate,
Still flutters there, the sole unquiet thing.
Methinks, its motion in this hush of nature
Gives it dim sympathies with me who live,
Making it a companionable form,

² Hanson, *The Early Years*, 275.

³ See Muirhead, *Coleridge as Philosopher*, 54-6, on his relation to Kant and Schelling. C. himself says that all his ideas had arrived before he saw a 'book of German metaphysics, later than Wolf and Leibnitz' (*Letters*, ii, 735f); and 'I have read a great deal of German; but I do dearly, dearly, dearly love my own countrymen of old times, and those of my contemporaries who write in their spirit' (i, 373).

⁴ 'The shifting current in the shoreless chaos of the fancy in which the streamy continuum of passive association is broken into zigzag by sensation from within and without' (*B.L.* (1847), i, 225): he seeks the dialectic spiral. His *zigzag* is linked in turn with the 18th. cent. image of the *Meander*. (Lloyd, in his treacherous novel *Edmund Oliver*, tried to depict C.'s 'strange dreaminess' as purely drug-confusion.)

Whose puny flaps and freaks the idling Spirit
By its own mood interprets, everywhere
Echo or mirror seeking of itself,
And makes a Toy of thought.

This description of the reverie-process merging with the ash film flutter has its significance underlined by coming between two pictures of Frost's 'secret ministry', which conclude with 'silent icicles, quietly shining to the quiet Moon'. The inner life is thus related to the ceaseless work of nature (especially in its aspects of qualitative change through heat or freezing) and is given indeed a purposive orientation in the midst of what seems at a glance an account of aimless musing.

Elsewhere Coleridge comments on a 'conical volcano of coal, half an inch high, ejaculating an inverted cone of smoke', and adds some verses about 'the poet's eye in his tipsy hour hath a magnifying power', which can see in accidents of smoke 'phantoms of sublimity'. And in the sonnet on *Clouds*, he speaks of the delight of letting the 'easily-persuaded eye' make 'the shifting clouds be what they please' at eve or in moonlight: gold rivers between red banks, crags endlessly ascended.

Here he is simply in key with the whole movement which since Savage and Thomson has taken light-changes as emblems of spiritual and historical change; but he relates the light-changes more fully and consciously to thought-process and to the associative skein, seeking continually for the clue of a dynamic organising power amid the scattered details:

Seeing a mackerel, it may happen, that I immediately think of gooseberries, because I at the same time ate mackerel with gooseberries as the sauce. The first syllable of the latter word, being that which coexisted with the image of the bird so-called, I may then think of a goose. In the next moment the image of a swan may arise before me, though I had never seen the two birds together. (*B.L.*, i, 86.)

Upon my soul I believe there is not a letter in those words round which a world of imagery does not circumsolve; your room, your garden, the cold bath, the moonlight rocks, Barristed, Moore, and simple-looking Frere, and dreams of wonderful things, attached to your name—and Skiddaw, and Glenramara, and Eagle Crag, and you, Wordsworth, and me, on the top of them (*Letters*, i, 336: to Davy on his Galvanic Habitudes of Charcoal).

Voluntary ideas were every minute passing, more or less transformed into vivid spectra. . . .

While I wrote that last sentence, I had a vivid recollection, indeed an ocular spectrum, of our room in College Street, a curious instance of association (i, 341, 427).

And he compares himself to a talker who uses so many ideas, images, etc., that the mind's eye of the listener is dazzled by the rapid succession of colours, 'a great blaze of colour all about something' (*A.P.*). The succession becomes a unifying leap.

This leap is made by the Imagination. 'Call the world Spider; and at fancy's touch, Thought becomes image and I see it such . . . ' till the 'viscous masonry' creates 'a dusky chamber that excludes the day'. Here is the concreting transformative activity, which involves the unity of all the senses. *Biographia Literaria* (1817: chs. xiii-xiv) sets out at length this theory of the imagination and its powers; and for the first time in our thought a definite though insecurely-based concept of the dialectics of development is defined.⁵

Two forces, opposed in their essential nature, meet and combine, and the result is in no sense a mere sum of their aggregated ingredients. 'No other conception is possible but that the product must be a *tertium quid*. . . . Now this *tertium quid* can be no other than an interpenetration of the counteracting powers, partaking of both.' The imagination's business is to grasp and reveal the action of this dialectical principle in human life.⁶

Blake had achieved an essentially dialectical position, laying more emphasis on the conflict of opposites; but his statement of the resolution never reached Coleridge's extended clarity. On the other hand, poetically, his work went more fully into the dialectical process of history and experience than Coleridge ever did. But in any event, Blake's work had no impact on its period, and was not at all accessible till the bad days when the revolutionary forces had almost wholly ebbed out of our poetry, so that its dialectic was mystically misinterpreted. Coleridge, on the contrary, stayed in the maelstrom and handed his thought over directly to his period.

Coleridge subdivides imagination into primary and secondary. The first is 'the living power and prime agent of all human perception'. The second is:

an echo of the former, co-existing with the conscious will . . . differing only in degree and in the mode of its operation. It dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to recreate; or where this process is rendered impossible, yet still at all events it struggles to idealise and to unify. It is essentially vital, even as all objects, as objects, are essentially fixed and dead.

⁵ In *The Destiny of Nations* (1796) Fancy is the Hartleian power that does the primary work of controlling the senses (historically the form of primitive consciousness): 'that first unsensualises the dark mind . . . bids it swell with wild activity . . . till Superstition with unconscious hand seizes Reason on the throne.'

⁶ Memory becomes an active function in this outlook. C. uses metaphors that suggests mere linkage ('the hooks-and-eyes of the memory,' *Biog. Epist.*, ii, 53, 59), but even here we feel a functional touch, a sense of opposites that is not in the mechanist key. More characteristic still, the 'retina-image is 'supported by the images of memory flowing in on the impulse of immediate impression' (*A.P.*). 'In omnem actum perceptionis imaginatio influit efficienter,' says Wolfie (Wolff) in his *Psychologia Rationalis*, 1734. C. adds, 'But he is no more who would have realised this idea, who has already established the foundations and the law of the theory.' A note explains: 'In Reimarius on The Instincts of Animals, Tom Wedgwood's ground principle of the influx of memory on perception is fully and beautifully described.'

Fancy he seeks to distinguish as a minor faculty capable only of playfully bringing opposed objects together without the dialectical process of conflict, fusion, resolution.

There are many scholastic touches: the opposition of imaginative activity and objects as an opposition of the living and the dead (which involves the idea of matter as in its essence static, the idea of absolute inertia which is fundamental in Newtonian physics), and the hard line between imagination and fancy. Worse, Coleridge wavers between the idea of a resolution and that of a reconciliation of opposites.⁷ But the enormous advance which his analysis makes towards the grasping of process and development can hardly be exaggerated. The failure of English thought to take up his magnificent lead and carry on his work is the primary problem that confronts us in dealing with the problem of what went wrong after the Romantic Movement.

He is obsessed by the vital relation of unity and multiplicity, of organic structure and its components, of society and individual. Indeed it is this obsession, necessary after the long reign of mechanism, which tends to slur over the problem of conflict in the fused opposites.

I define life as the principle of individuation, or the power which unites a given all into a whole that is presupposed by all its parts.

Each man in a numerous society is not only co-existent with but virtually organised into the multitude of which he is an integral part. His idem is modified by the alter. And there arise impulses from this synthesis of alter et idem, myself and my neighbour.

But for my conscience, that is my affections and duties towards others, I should have no self.

He attacks 'mechanic philosophy', which knows nothing of organic or dialectical relations, only 'nearness, juxtapositions, decompositions', and which can deal only with 'the exact sum of the component quantities'. In a 'living and spiritual philosophy the two component counter powers actually penetrate each other, and generate a higher third, including both the former, its *tamen ut sit alia et major*."⁸

The unity of imagination and its material corresponds to the living relation of individual and society. Therefore the imaginative vision is essentially opposed to capitalist values and method. For capitalism, says Coleridge, violates

the sacred principles recognised by all laws, human and divine: the principle, indeed, which is the groundwork of all law and justice, that a person can never become a thing, nor be treated as such without wrong.⁹

⁷ In *Religious Musings* he attempts to define class-society as finding its stimulus and its destruction alike in the contradictory nature of private property—"twy-streaming fount"—but achieves no resolution for the poem's intense sense of crisis except a confused world-end and millenary feeling.

⁸ *Theory of Life* (see Needham, *Science Progress*, April, 1926); Muirhead, 193; *Anima Poetae*, 201.

⁹ See Alick West, *Crisis and Criticism*, 21f.

Thus, without being able to follow out the consequences, he anticipates Marx's thesis of capitalist fetichism.

The following passages will bring out the way in which the new sense of dynamic organic unity, developed polemically against the mechanist philosophy and its art-counterpart of neoclassic symmetries, swamps the awareness of conflict in the opposites:

(Fancy) has no other counters to play with, but fixities and definites, while (Imagination) dissolves, diffuses, dissipates.¹⁰

For a thing at the moment is but a thing of the moment; it must be taken up into the mind, diffuse itself through the whole multitude of shapes and thoughts, not one of which it leaves untinged, between not one of which and it some new thought is not engendered.

(The fused elements are) as difficult to separate (as) two dewdrops blended together on the bosom of a new-blown rose.

(Imagination seeks) the balance, the perfect reconciliation, affected between two conflicting principles of the Free Life and of the confining Form.¹¹

He does not abstract Reason in the neoclassic way as the Ruling Power (identified with gentlemanly judgement); but he sees it in platonic transcendence. It is 'the throne of actual ideas, or living, inborn, essential truths', and he makes something of a scholastic distinction between reason and understanding—the latter's peculiarity consists in its capacity to be irradiated by the reason, in its reciprocity. And even this is given to it by the presence of a higher power than itself. The understanding, to keep any hold on 'the fluctuating nature of its objects', must abstract; but Newton had gravity ('the constructive principle of the material universe') revealed to him by his 'ethereal intuition'.¹²

All this is weakly idealist, falling back on the very departmentalising of the spirit that Coleridge is reacting against; but it fumbles at the idea of Reason as an organising aspect of the dialectical processes of human activity. We understand the terms best if we see them as polemics against the neoclassic abstraction of Judgement.

They contemplate nothing but parts, and all parts are necessarily little, and the universe to them is but a mass of little things. . . . When they looked at great things, all became a blank, and they called *the want of imagination, judgement*.

Other passages show a desire to break through the schematic terms:

The poet, described in ideal perfection, brings the whole soul of man into activity, with the subordination of its faculties to each other,

¹⁰ B.L. (1847), ii, 12 (cf. 123), and i, 202: cf. *Lectures on Shakespeare* (1893), 220.

¹¹ A.P.; Notebook (*Archiv.*), 350; *Miscellanies* (ii, 85), 22.

¹² Kennedy, *The English Heritage of Coleridge*, 13f; *The Statesman's Manual*, 23, 64.

according their relative worth and dignity. He diffuses a tone and spirit of unity that blends, and (as it were) *fuses*, each into each, by that synthetic and magical power, to which we have exclusively appropriated the name of imagination. This power, first put into action by the will and imagination . . . (*B.L.*, ii, 12).

There he gets away from ethereal intuitions and the like, and tries to give will and understanding their due in the total process. He also draws in the notion of centralising *passion* (a dissident thesis going back to Dennis, the Wartons, Collins). Images 'become proofs of original genius only in so far as they are modified by predominant passion; or by associated thoughts or images awakened by that passion'.

The distinction on which he laid such stress, between Fancy and Imagination, is largely scholastic, an aftermath of Johnson's attack on the 'metaphysical' image as a mere fanciful conceit.¹³ Coleridge thus gives up Fancy to the enemy in order to bring forth the Imagination as revealing the dialectical process by which men advance to new truths, to deepened comprehensions of their relations in society and nature. Fancy then becomes for him the emblem of spiritual activity which remains mechanistically within the closed and limited universe of ruling values. Imagination is the revolutionary force bringing the new into existence, creating new centres of vital organisation, social or artistic.

Thus, though the mechanist strain is by no means fully avoided or thrown off, and though it appears in the opposition of living or free Spirit to inert or dead Matter, yet a deep advance has been made all along the line. The problem has been formulated; a decisive break with both mechanist and theological abstractions has been brought about.

NOW let us turn to Coleridge's use of *light-effects*, his effort to use the imagery of light-change to symbolise the transformative process, to express it with poetic concreteness. Ever since Thomson and

¹³ Lascelles Abercrombie, *Idea of Great Poetry*, 52-8; Garrod, *Wordsworth*, 145. C.'s own *Prefatory Essay* (1802), p. xxiv. (He also calls Fancy the Drapery of Poetic Genius; Imagination the Soul that pervades and 'forms all into one graceful and intelligent whole,' *B.L.*, ii, 13; i, 86.) His formulations keep hovering between idealist abstraction and the sense of the unity of spiritual and natural process. Reason's 'best Synonyme' is 'the forma formans, which contains in itself the law of its own conceptions.' Thus associated, Imagination 'generates and produces a form of its own', is 'in the highest sense' a 'dim analogue of creation', Kennedy, 18. Perhaps the strongest of influences from poet-thinkers pioneering towards his position is that of Collins, esp. the *Ode on the Poetical Character* which ousts Christ from the Sapphire Throne (shocking Mrs. Barbauld) and setting Fancy (Imagination) in its place to continue the dance of the 'shadowy tribes of mind' (a phrase taken by C. in *Religious Musings*). Twice in his notebook C. projected an Edition of Gray and Collins, and of the *Ode* he says that it 'inspired and whirled me along with greater agitations of enthusiasm than any of the most impassioned scenes in Schiller or Shakespeare,' 1796. (Garrod, *Collins*, 32, 51; *Letters*, i, 196, etc. See Lowes, 399, for *Ancient Mariner* and Collins.)

Savage, the dissident trends, though generally acclaiming Newton as Demiurge of a new creation, had gone on using with increased force his spectrum-analysis to build up landscapes interpreted in terms of light and colour. To Newton and Locke colour was subjective and not real (only figure and motion were real); and so by an insistence that light was not only real but was also either the 'vital principle' itself or a basic clue to its nature and action, the poets were in effect attacking the Newtonian mechanism. They used the moment of light-change for their key-effects—the dramatic light-burst centralising an experience or image of crisis, revelation, recognition, or the gradual and universal change, such as eve, dawn, moonrise or storm, which modified or transfigured the whole 'face of nature', to express general historical or organic movement. Thus at the heart of the Newtonian universe there emerged and expanded the concept and image of transformation, organic and evolutionary change, crisis and revolution.

Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley and Keats all embody varying culminations of this trend, and with them, as first with Smart and then with Blake, the image of light-change or colour-movement is bound up, consciously, with the idea of the total revolutionary change of life.

Turn to *Biographia Literaria* and we find that Coleridge and Wordsworth had discussed the relation of emotional truth and light-effect.

During the first year that Mr. Wordsworth and I were neighbours, our conversations turned frequently on the two cardinal points of poetry, the power of exciting the sympathy of the reader by a faithful adherence to the truth of nature, and the power of giving the interest of novelty by the modifying colours of imagination.

The sudden charm, which accidents of light and shade, which moonlight or sunset diffused over a known and familiar landscape, appeared to us to represent the practicability of combining both.

That is, the strange light-change provided the setting for sharpening all the familiar shapes, for expressing emotional movement and change.

In chapter V Coleridge offers to show how to turn a statement of fact into an imaginative one:

In the following two lines, for instance, there is nothing objectionable, nothing which could not preclude them from forming, in their proper place, part of a descriptive poem:

Behold yon row of pines, that shorn and bowed
Bend to the sea-blast, seen at twilight eve.

But with a small alteration of rhythm, the same words would be equally in their place in a book of topography, or in a descriptive tour. The same image will rise into semblance of poetry if thus conveyed:

Yon row of bleak and visionary pines,
By twilight glimpse discerned, mark! how they flee

From the fierce sea-blast, all their tresses wild
Streaming before them.

Note that for a typical setting he chose the sea-evening with windy trees; and to poetise the passage he intensifies the motion, turning the trees into women and making them flee with dishevelled hair—so that the picture of bending and flurried boughs gains in rhythmic force and contour. He adds the 'instantaneous' element—'by twilight glimpse discerned'—and activises by the adjectives 'bleak and visionary'. For the term *visionary* must not be taken throughout the 18th century as meaning mistily remote; on the contrary it expresses a special clarity, the quality of the revelatory lightburst or sunset-slant; it assumes that the mind is in the object and the object is in the mind. That is, it is a term strongly expressing the desire to find an active relation to nature and society.

Coleridge is in his way as aware of the significance of the eve-image as Wordsworth. Thus he defines its aesthetic value:

I saw the town perfectly beautiful, and the whole softened down into complete keeping, if I may borrow a term from the painters. The sky over Hatzeburg and all the rest was a pure evening blue, while over the west it was covered with lighty sandy clouds. Hence a deep red light spread over the whole prospect in undisturbed harmony with the red town, the browned red woods, and the yellow-red reeds on the skirts of the lake. Two or three boats with single persons paddling them, floated up and down in the rich light, which not only was itself in harmony with all, but brought all into harmony. (*Satyrane's Letters*.)

Or again:

Our attention was diverted to the beauty and singularity of the sunset and its effects on the objects around us. There were woods in the distance. A rich sandy light (nay, of a much deeper colour than sandy) lay over these woods that blackened in the blaze. Over that part of the woods which lay immediately under the intenser light, a brassy mist floated.

The trees on the ramparts, and the people moving to and fro between them, were cut or divided into equal segments of deep shade and brassy light. . . . The portions could not have been more regular. All else was obscure. It was a fairy scene! and to increase its romantic character, among the moving objects, thus divided into alternate shade and brightness, was a beautiful child, dressed with elegant simplicity, riding on a stately goat. . . .

And again in *Satyrane's Letters* he brings fully out the spire-fire as light-centralisation, which Dyer in *Grongar Hill* (the poem which in 1776 with Thomson's *Winter* inaugurated the first definite stages of the romantic and picturesque movement) had first described:

An instinctive taste teaches men to build their churches in flut

countries with spire-steeple which . . . when they reflect the brazen light of a rich though rainy sunset, appear to be a pyramid of flame burning heavenward.

Such passages show from what source he drew 'the tone, the atmosphere, and with it the depth and height of the ideal world', to be spread round 'forms, incidents and situations, of which, for the common view, custom had bedimmed all the lustre, had dried up the sparkle and the dewdrop'.

His response to light-effects, especially of eve, dawn or moonrise, was acute. He thus writes from Germany about the Lake at Ratzeburg:

the moment the Sun peeped over the Hill, the mist broke in the middle, and in a few seconds stood divided, leaving a broad road across the Lake; and between these two Walls of mist the sunlight burnt upon the ice, forming a kind of golden fire intolerably bright. . . .

On the evening of the next day, at sun-set, the shattered ice . . . appeared of a deep blue and in shape like an agitated sea; beyond this, the water, that ran up between the great islands of ice . . . shone of a yellow green; but all these scattered Ice-Islands themselves, were of an intensely bright blood-colour—they seemed of blood and light in union. (*Letters*, i, 275f.)

In these directly descriptive passages the fusion with human suffering and release is of course not present; but the way in which Coleridge records the impression for creative use is to be seen in the continual stress on contrasts and oppositions, on movement and tension. The blood-and-light united in the ice-islands is a good example, pointing as it does both to the sunset sea-of-blood and Cowpers's drift-self of ice.

Coleridge saw from the top of a coach 'vivid flashes of lightning, that seemed almost to alternate with the flash-like re-emersions of the waning moon, from the ever-shattered, ever-closing clouds'.¹⁴ A perfect light-image for crisis-passage. His *Notebook* has this strange summary of light-effects and human drama:

a dusky light—a purple flash
crystalline splendour—light blue—
Green lightnings—
In that eternal and delirious
wrath fires—
inward desolations
an horror of great darkness
great things—on the ocean
counterfeit infinity—

(*Archiv.*, 369.)

He suggests as pictures: a babe asleep by the light of glowworms, or

¹⁴ *Letters*, i, 365.

'the infant playing with its mother's shadow'.¹⁵ He noted J. Haygarth's statement of a sunset-effect in which the head's shadow had a kind of prismatic halo, and claimed to have experienced it himself. He studied the various accounts by travellers and scientists of the Sea-Rainbow; and was much affected by Priestley's account of Light from Putrescent Substances, as well as by descriptions of peculiar light-effects, phosphorescent glows, etc., in books of travel and discovery, e.g. that of Capt. Cook.¹⁶ He claimed, in connection with animal magnetism, to have seen 'my own body under the Bedcloaths flashing silver Light from whatever part I prest it', and related the effect to excited or diseased nerves.¹⁷

His Keswick window and the light-effects it revealed left a deep mark on his mind. He watched moon and cloud and wrote 'strange night-pieces. . . . Coleridge has been watching from his window the great half moon as it slowly sank behind the mountain ridge'. And he was fascinated by an effect that mingled room and landscape with flickering fire as the centralising link.

The window of my library at Keswick is opposite to the fireplace, and looks out on a very large garden that occupies the whole slope of the hill on which the house stands. Consequently, the rays of light transmitted through the glass, that is, the rays from the garden, the opposite mountains, and the bridge, river, lake and vale interjacent, and the rays reflected from it, of the fireplace, etc., enter the eye at the same moment. At the coming on of evening, it was my frequent amusement to watch the image or reflection of the fire, that seemed burning in the bushes or between the trees . . . according as there was more or less light; and which still arranged itself among the real objects of vision, with a distance and magnitude proportioned to its greater or lesser faintness. (*Works*, ii, 135.)

One more example, which shows the fusion of Memory, Dawn-Image, and Poetic Impulse. The moment was September 10th, 1823, precisely at ten o'clock—as he states in some doggerel: 'The watch and Clock do both agree'.

An Air that whizzed . . . (right across the diameter of my Brain) exactly like a Bummel Bee . . . close to my eye, at once sharp and burry, right over the summit of the Quantock at earliest Dawn just between the Nightingale that I stopt to hear in the Copse at the Foot of Quantock, and the first Sky-Lark that was a Song-Fountain, dashing up and sparkling to the Ear's eye, in full column . . . out of Sight, over the Cornfields on the Descent of the Mountain on the

¹⁵ A.P., and Archiv., 360; cf. *Lines written at Shurton Bars* (glow-worm, eve, the flashing eve-flower, etc.).

¹⁶ Haygarth, *Memoirs of Lit. and Philos. Soc. of Manchester*, iii, 1790; Lowes, 30, 470f, 205; *The Three Graves*. Lowes, 67 (sea-rainbow); 38ff. 81f, 349f (Priestley, etc.).

¹⁷ Lowes, 547.

other side—out of sight, tho' twice I beheld its mute shoot downward in the sunshine like a falling star of silver.

Then follows the first draft of a lyric, here called *Aria Spontanea*, later *Youth and Age*, one of the very last spurts of poetry in his life. Behind it lies the sudden nexus that swings him back into a dawn of thirty years before, in which the contrast and union of nightingale and lark, night and day, youth and age, welds the poetic image.

Industrial process also played its part in developing the new colour-sense. Jago in *Edgehill* had brought in the colour-fury of the smelting furnace, and Savage knew of the 'glowing mass' brightening and hardening into glass. Coleridge was much affected by the furnaces he saw in the Harz Mountains (May, 1799): 'A scene of terrible beauty is a furnace of boiling metal, darting, every moment blue, green and scarlet lightning, like serpents' tongues.'

THERE is no need to go in detail into his use of the eve-image. I have already shown how he felt the potency of the sunset-hour. He has many fine eve-poems, but he is not supremely the eve-poet as Wordsworth is. The *Nightingale* of April, 1798, is an excellent example of his use of the eve-image to create an effect of harmony with nature via the nightingale-song. He tells how he has taught his baby son to know the evening-star, but a moment of greater excitement is moonrise:

I hurried with him to our orchard-plot,
And he beheld the moon, and, hushed at once,
Suspended his sobs . . .

And it is as the poet of the moon that he described himself in *France*:

How oft, pursuing fancies holy,
My moonlight way o'er flowering weeds I wound,
Inspired, beyond the reach of folly,
By each rude shape and wild unconquerable sound,

finding thus the Spirit of Liberty. It is of interest that the eve-pines which we found bowed and wind-driven appear here in harmony with the sea to express a faith in the ultimate unions of liberty:

. . . on that sea-cliff's verge,
Whose pines, scarce travelled by the breeze above,
Had made one murmur with the distant surge! . . .
Possessing all things with intensest love,
O Liberty! my spirit felt thee there.

And in *Religious Musings* it is the contrast of harmoniously 'mild eve' ('and many tinted streams and setting sun') with the world to which he returns that drives him to revolt—to ask, 'why there was misery in a world so fair'.

Again, the moon-passages are very numerous, but enough has been said to show how central the *moon-image* was for Coleridge. One

more example will suffice, *Dejection*. The whole of this fine Ode derives from the image of the haloed Moon. The halo is made the emblem of the flow of creativity from within, the source of transformation:

All melodies the echoes of that voice,
All colours a suffusion from that light.

Where a new note, or rather a new stress on the note that was sounded by Thomson, it is to be found, is in the use of the *dawn-image*. Coleridge has the usual use of dawn to express the revolutionary forces. Of the French Revolution he says in *France*, 'The Sun is rising, though ye hid his light.' And in *Verses addressed to J. Horne Tooke and the Company who met on June 28th 1796, to celebrate his poll at the Westminster Election*, he writes that at the last meeting the dawn-promises were pale,

But now such fair varieties of Light
O'ertake the heavy sailing Clouds of Night;
Th' Horizon kindles with so rich a red,
That tho' the *Sun still hides* his glorious head,
Th' impatient *Matin-bird, assur'd of Day*,
Leaves his low nest to meet its earliest ray. . . .

His italics show that he still had hopes of revolutionary developments in the near future in England.¹⁹ He carries the dawn-image further by describing Tooke as the Patriot and Sage whose breeze-like Spirit has dispersed the mists of Pedantry, 'mists in which Superstition's pigmy band seem'd Giant Forms, the Genii of the Land'—a use of the giant-image rather in the pre-Thomson vein of satire. He then goes on to insist once more on 'gradual Dawn' chasing the phantoms of Evil and indignantly denounces Britain's counter-revolutionary role.

The greatest of his dawn-poems, however, is the *Hymn before Sunrise in the Vale of Chamouni*, which powerfully defines a conviction of vast gathering forces which move and swell towards the dawn—demanding 'not only passive praise'. The great mountain-forms rise and expand in the first dawn-lights and the poet is triumphantly one with them. But the date is 1802, and the idiom has shifted to the religious abstraction. Still, the aesthetic step has been taken which leads in turn to Shelley's re-secularisation of the strengthened image.
(*To be completed*)

¹⁸ cf. what he says of the child Hartley: 'An utter visionary! Like the moon among thin clouds, he moves in a circle of light of his own making.'

¹⁹ The sonnet to Godwin sees him as the Aurora Borealis: 'the mimic morn electric pours a stream of rosy light.' Behind all the light-imagery I discuss are long trails from the days of Thomson and Savage, which, untouched by Lowes's analysis, provide the meaning of the creative process in these poems of Coleridge (or any of the great romantics). I am writing a lengthy study on this aspect—here, for the moment, is one clue in connection with the Godwin Sonnet: Mrs. Elizabeth Rowe (c. 1730) sees the Aurora Borealis as emblem of the total transformation of life, the advent of the Last Judgment (Letters, xxxiii).

THREE ENGLISH POETS

Stanley Snaith

THE THORNTREE IN THE BOMBED CHURCH

The walls and faiths are down, but what is thrust
From the heart's community has still the power
To enter its own adytum, laying the ghost
Of human absence with an act of flower.

The vilified dust assumes the expiation,
The image usurps the fact, the Mystery
Stands morning-naked, a fount of annunciation;
The Thorns have triumphed by their need to Be.

Look for no ceremony in this. The lack
Of doctrine is a tree's sufficient creed.
The pure unveiling is always at our back;
Creation holds its ambush in the seed.

Leave any place our hands have made, and some
Kingdom we dared not reckon with may come.

John R. Pulling

A STRONGHOLD SURE

No peace lies calmer than the hills'
Reflection in your calm fjords
Nor more secure. The rock that guards
Your harbour, winds that blow
Along your shores and fill
The sails of Summer—each bestow
On your rich land, their yet more rich rewards.

Your heart beats in your painted flag
Against the western gales,
Your strength within the hands that bring
The glistening silver shoals
To land; and where the cormorant
Hangs poised above the sea
Sounds shrill your voice, above the wind
Ringing defiantly.

But whilst, at peace, you plough your field,
The perjured moneychanger casts
The dragon's teeth he hopes may yield
A crop to lay our lives to waste.
Above your harvest hangs a cloud.
Within the calm there lies concealed
The embryonic threat, the tongue
Of flame that would devour the world.

As Koltur's walls defy and break
The thundering ocean's tidal roar
Our will may break and so deny
These unrelenting tides of war.
Guard then the little homes among
Your sloping fields. With all your power
Make strength, heart, hand and voice as one
For Liberty, a stronghold sure.

(Koltur: a precipitous island of the Shetlands, facing the Atlantic.)

W. P. Yates

HIGH IN THE DESERT AIR

High in the desert air
A snow cap hangs
Invisible and insulate;
Its foothills lie
Beneath blankets of sand
Buttressing a dream
Without a name.

Under the lick of the wind
Runs the sound of water,
A thread of blue in the yellow
Making the green arise
Of grass and corn and palms,
Waylaying the traveller.
With a sudden sense of ease.

Over asphalt streets
Runs a shiver of green
And over empty plains
Stare open window spaces,
And out of the forest
Comes the roar of traffic
Linking hidden cities.

Buried things will rise,
Shapes leap out of rocks,
Roofs drop from the skies
The curtain walls around
New settlers, and the world
Will continually surprise
Its accustomed creatures.

BONFIRE NIGHT

Sudden the match came, and the whole flaming world
Went up in a lick of hell, the petrol kings,
Paraffin knights and all their waxy dames,
All up. And fellow, was it hot!
Hotter than jazz, or kiss, or a blowlamp even.
It was so hot it welded earth and sky. One flash
And all the big and little ends were joined
Like wedding rings, and shining gold with fire.
The flannel lads and sawdust dolls, balloons and kites,
The whole mad waxworks in the matchboard ark
Went up like 'Zekiel, like a nigger's shout,
Into the middle of the air. We shout like hell,
But there's no laughing; that comes after, when the ash
Is washed out of our eyes, spat from our teeth.
And then its roasted chestnuts, hot potatoes
For foundry men, smiths, charcoal burners.

And who was it struck the match? Why, they themselves!
We didn't even have to give a blow.
For years they'd gathered faggots, tarred the roads,
Filled oil-tanks and accumulated coal, wore
Inflammable vests and celluloid collars, furs
And fine feathers, cluttered up the deck
So you could hardly see. But we could see
What was coming. The wheels ran down,
And when the lamps went out—well, strike a light.
And that was that! We stood and watched it all
Like kids in asbestos suits on Guy Fawkes' night,
The whole world for a guy, lock, stock and barrel,
And the match thrown in. Now little chimney-sweeps
Can dream of clover, clutching nickel hoovers,
And yokels tell of potash good for clay,
And drivers sweep a road for cattle-drovers,
And mob-capped chars stand up and have their say.

So it wasn't arson; and it wasn't a great blaze
That was the revolution. This is it.
Not just the green crop through the ashes,
But the new moulds that we make to stretch our wills.
Strike while the world is hot, make new designs
Out of the scrap. The man who makes and wields
New tools adds to his cubits, and the smith
Fashions his heart on the anvil, sometimes breaks it.
But this is the pain of labour; a new world
Is all demands, desires, unfulfilment.
And we who are old and stiff in habit envy
The phoenix youth that sees tomorrow's sun
Shine on our dream, and wonder how he'll take
A world that has outgrown us. But our toil
Is lighted by the pyre of our own youth.
Thankful to see and survive it, we can boast
We saw the biggest fire kill the last plague.

CHRONICLE & POLEMIC

Jack Beeching

O GEORGEOUS ASPIRIN GIRL

With provoking haunches
And vibrating bust
Descend, O gorgeous aspirin girl
And dissipate our lust.

In your ritual bathing-dress,
Laconic, not obscene,
Leap down from the posters,
Step down from the screen.

Image of nubility,
Sanctified erotic,
Recline against the barrack wall
In posture patriotic.

You're the public concubine
Who at night inhabits
The ruminative pillows
Of these trousered rabbits.

A true madonna cures
Those who burn a candle.
My but you'd look silly
With a babe to dandle.

Subtly though you bid,
Divining our neurosis,
To cure our wind and pimples,
Thirst and halitosis.

You are far too perfect
Cinctured in that vesture
For a fallible attitude
Or immodest gesture.

You are far too rational
To forgive our sins
But will sell us bottled beer
And sexy magazines.

A real madonna smiles
Miraculous responses.
You are but the dead-pan girl
Of commercial ponces.

John Lewis

THE COMIC STRIP

(1) The adult comic strip is an invention of the U.S.A., and consisted in the direct application to the adult world of a medium devised originally for children unable to read or in the first stages of learning to read. In this fact resides its whole nature, its extreme element of cultural regression.

No one could object to the original type of children's comic, with its simple stimulation of normal child-fantasy. But when the method

is applied to the adult world, with incalculable vulgarity and stimulation of the worst kind of daydream, one of the most potent forces for cultural degeneration has been set loose.

(2) The first comic strip characters began in the James Gordon Bennett chain of American newspapers. It arose as part of the general effort in the U.S.A. to devise journals that appealed to the illiterate or semi-illiterate masses of emigrants which the large-scale development of U.S. industry was absorbing, in particular from the backward areas of Europe. Thus was born *Buster Brown*; and in the Hearst Press, *The Yellow Kid*.

These early efforts were mainly robust and funny—a tradition still maintained to some extent by *The Katzenjammer Kids*. But steadily the element of plain fun faded out, and more dubious elements took its place.

The decisive turn to the bad came in 1931, as part of the increasing crisis in U.S. economy at that time. A hard-up artist cashed in on the topical theme of the Chicago gangster, and invented *Dick Tracey*, the granite-jawed detective, the scourge of the Capones. Today this artist, Chester Gould, draws the adventures of Tracey for the *Chicago Tribune-New York Daily News* Syndicate, and result is bought daily by 13,000,000 people in the U.S.A., and is syndicated all over Australia. He is quite well-known in Britain too.

(3) After conquering the U.S. public, the strip has invaded many other parts of the world—everywhere, in fact, that U.S.A. economic influences dominate. In the States themselves they are read by well over half the adults and two-thirds of the children (from the age of 6). Their public numbers some 65,000,000. More than half the newspaper readers have their favourite strip characters. Between 75 per cent. and 90 per cent. of parents (according to educational statistics), in a recent survey covering 3,000 adults, approved of the reading of all strips by their children. The approving percentage was never less than 33, whatever the reading habits of the parents.¹

In Britain the American strip is imported. It appears on many news-stands and even in Woolworths and other big stores. It is syndicated throughout the Empire, especially in Canada and Australia. In Britain its impact has destroyed to a considerable extent the national type of comic strip and has imposed the U.S. type.

(4) The best known example here is the strip-page in *The Daily Mirror*, with its circulation of some 4,500,000. This page consists of eight pictorial narratives. On another page appears the *Jane* strip. The page is read by 55 per cent. of male readers and 59 per cent. of female readers; *Jane* is read by 75 per cent.

In *Jane*, in infinitely varied sameness, the heroine finds herself naked or semi-naked in embarrassing circumstances; and the strip

¹ Zarburgh: *Journal of Educational Sociology*, xxiii.

may thus be said to combine the dream-anxiety of losing one's clothes and the daydream of encountering a lovely naked girl unexpectedly. The fact that everything happens quite morally despite the continual teasing marks what has been so far the British variety of excitation as compared with the all-out American way.

The average unit of communication, usually shown in balloons issuing from the characters' mouths, is a seven-word sentence, five of the words being one-syllable, two of two-syllables. A typical sentence is, 'Knock him cold, George!'

The strip, in fact, sets the key to the whole paper. The number of words is kept to a minimum, the dialogue or narrative is conveyed in the shortest and simplest vocabulary of one- or two-syllabled words. The language is limited almost entirely to active verbs, concrete nouns and personal pronouns.

Such a style is inadequate to convey or express anything but the crudest of notions and events. The constant reader in a few years grows incapable of participating as a thinking adult in modern society. The problems of that society then appear to be carried on and dealt with in an alien language. And the saturation with strip-idioms and images can be regarded as a sign of cultural and intellectual infantilism, arrested development or regression to infantile levels of daydream. The strip thus acts as a substitute for the novel, for drama, for adult artforms among many millions of people, and, where thus strongly rooted, prevents any advance to the adult forms of expression.

(5) The strip thus intrudes on practically the whole sphere of culture, using and degrading themes from that sphere in order to hold up any movement from the infantile levels. The strips deal with Bible Story, History Lessons, and so on; and set out to reduce the classics of literature, Shakespeare, Tolstoy, etc., to strip-form, with everything culturally significant omitted and what is left vulgarised into the stereotype. The conditioned mind responds only to the coloured picture and the legend-condensation. Already there are these many millions on millions of people who have only this degraded contact with the classics, with the whole heritage of human culture.

The sensational material of the strips has thus been expertly summarised:²

The strips stress cruelty. Tortures are a popular theme, with Japs, Germans or Jews as the villains. (Sometimes these villains seem meant to look like members of the Chinese Communist Army.³)

They glorify power. Obvious examples are the Superman, the Marvel Family, etc. In nearly all the crime-comics the hero is invulnerable, above normal physical laws. *Superman* was declared by Setan Valentine to be the ideal of millions of American boys between the ages of 3 and 63. He solves all problems by sheer magic.

They provide fantasies of the future, calculated to facilitate the

² E.N.E.G. *Bulletin* for May, 1949.

³ Steve Canyon in *Toronto Star Weekly*, July 30th, 1949.

emergence of fascist forms of government. The future societies are always fascist in character—sometimes disguised to the extent that the dictators are shown as a benevolent despotism. The heroes of these future worlds, *Brick Bradford*, *Buck Rogers*, *Speed Gordon*, and others, only oppose their enemy dictators as bad men, not as dictators. When the bad dictators are overthrown, a council of benevolent despots take over. The only choice presented is between 'good' and 'bad' dictators; the idea of any socialist way out, of any active role of the people as such, is never even hinted at.

They sentimentalise social reality. Thus, in *Orphan Annie*, the benevolent capitalist shows how a little kindness can right all wrongs. There is no flaw or fault in capitalism which kind hearts cannot remedy.

(6) In stating these dominant types of the strip-world, however, we should err if we ignored the existence of an occasional healthier type. Thus, it is probable that *Nancy* is the best comic character today. This strip is concerned with the efforts of a group of bright unsentimental children, with genial self-possessed temperaments. This strip has a remarkable brave vital energy that its artist, Ernie Bushmiller, gets. Bushmiller's kids have wonderfully integrated characters, combining smart socialibility with tough independence.⁴

(7) But this type remains the exception. Henry Ford is reported to have said that what we want is more morons. Clearly the strip-fan of Superman, etc., is likely to imagine the U.S.A. carrying on a push-button war, in which a super-fortress with a super atom-bomb, piloted by a super-pilot, simply wipes out all opposition. On the one hand is the enjoyment of vicarious cruelty and vice. 'Every page constitutes a virtual manual of crime; women stabbed while sleeping, women thrown to their death from skyscraper windows, men shot in the back with submachine guns, children being tortured, specifically named poisons being slipped into drinks—in short, an encyclopedia of every criminal offence mentioned by law.' And on the other hand, the daydream of infinite success.

The American Hero, with the aid of nothing but dream-fantasy, is invulnerable and breaks down all opposition. Riches and an adolescent's dream of bliss are his—provided he leaves it to Superman. And girls are his, a harem of houris, shading from the coy partners of a superman to the frankly sex-obsessed girl friend of L'il Abner.

As a price of his release from the anxieties of the real American world the addict accepts a set of moral axioms that make nonsense of all Christian and humanist teachings. Human nature, he learns, is fundamentally ruthless and aggressive, even when it is on the side of justice (the F.B.I.). His own efforts can achieve nothing, but if he trusts to the intervention of the benevolent deus-ex-machina all problems will

⁴ Farber in *New Masses*.

be solved. Women, wealth, fame are the rightful crown of this mighty (atomic) genius.

(8) It would be impossible to devise a method more capable of laying hold on the powerful elements in the individual and the group, which, properly released, provide the dynamic basis of art-creation and constructive work. Of laying hold on these elements, dispersing them in regressive daydream, and inverting them into the barriers against all artistic and social advance.

All the vast potentiality of American techniques and productive modes, which could be made the basis of a reality far richer and more surprising than all the exploits of Tarzan or Kaanga, is abstracted from the real world, from the struggle which alone can marry dream and society. All awareness of the real contradictions and conflicts pervading American society is crushed down. The addict feels his fate bound up (via the superman) with the uncontrollable and irresponsible masters of power. All the frustrations and anxieties, which if truly faced, would drive him to oppose those masters, are used to hand him over helpless to the destructive forces, for use against the 'enemies' of those forces, i.e. all the truth and constructive purpose in our world.

(9) The strip invasion of Britain made a big leap forward when on April 14th, 1950, Messrs. Hulton issued the first number of *Eagle*, *The New National Strip Cartoon Weekly*; a 20-page highly-coloured production (at 3d., increased later to 4d.). Its editor is a clergyman of the Church of England, who submitted the script and drawings to Hultons. His plans were at once accepted, and he was appointed editor.

The first issues are concerned with Space Ships travelling to Venus, Cowboys and Indians, P.C. 49, and the Smash-and-Grab thieves, a Spy series by Bernard Newman, and a chaotic serial of mysterious flights and kidnappings called *Spy Against the World*. The production seems intended for adolescents; and with its strip of St. Paul, and other uplift features, purports to be on a respectable level, above the crudities of the U.S.A.

Still, this large-scale effort to develop the strip-method here cannot but have the effect of lowering standards because the reliance on the daydream cannot but set up an accumulative down-pressure, as happened in the States themselves. This is certainly a matter in which 'bad money drives out good'.

(10) These ominous developments have not come about, here or in the U.S.A., without protest: these protests in turn have drawn into support of the strip many individuals or groups who arrogate to themselves the role of guardians-of-culture.

In America, educationalists and sociologists have been much exercised over the strip-problem. In defence of the strip and its

vested interests, a recent issue of the *Journal of Educational Sociology*⁵ was devoted to the argument that strips did no harm. (American publishers nett \$52,000,000 yearly from strips; while in Britain, comics of 30 to 40 pages are priced at a shilling each.)

F. Thrasher, Professor of Education in New York University, is one of the strip-defenders. He declares that strips never cause delinquency, crime or undesirable sex-behaviour. Crime, etc., he says, is multi-causal and hard to explain. Children who commit crimes (as Cressey writing on films shows) come from districts in which everyday life is cruder and more sex-ridden than in any film. Therefore strips are harmless.

We must be more 'scientific' in judging the effects of strips on children, says Thrasher; and he is supported by Josette Frank, Educational Associate of the Child Association of America. We must first be sure that strips have any effect at all.

Thus the terribly low living conditions of large sections of the U.S. people are used to exonerate the strip; and a pseudo-objectivity is used to hide the fact that the bad conditions and the strips are both different aspects of the same basic malaise and contradiction.

(11) A less bald, but equally objectionable, defence of the strip has appeared in the *Times Educational Supplement*. The whole paragraph, with its equivocating tone, its smug attempt to keep a high moral tone while touching a subservient cap to the lords of the press, is worth quoting. In many ways this English and devious way of abandoning cultural standards is more despicable and unpleasant than the blatant American.

'*Comic Strips*. Children are more tough-minded than their solicitous seniors often imagine. They thrive on intellectual fodder that would nauseate a grown-up. They can consume comic strips with the same avidity as jam puffs before breakfast, and fastidious guardians are inclined to register horror at both feats. There is, however, nothing inherently depraving in the strip cartoon. It is a form of representation, and, as such, morally neutral. It is this fundamental form in which the Stations of the Cross are represented. Much of what is now set out in this way is vicious, and much more is vulgar. An attempt to produce a comic free from these abuses, such as is made in *Eagle*, published by the Hulton Press, deserves unprejudiced consideration. That it avoids viciousness is quite apparent, though it cannot so easily meet the charge of vulgarity; if, as is claimed, it is educational, the pill is sweetened with an unwholesome amount of sugar. Although *Eagle* has the best intentions, it must also be asked if its effect will not be to prepare its readers for a later addiction to adult strip publications conducted on less worthy principles.'

No one would claim that to substitute the cartoon for the written word is harmful to the young child who cannot read. But, in fact,

⁵ xxiii.

the T.E.S. thesis slides uneasily from the vicious strip to the jam-puff, from the riveting on the child and adolescent of the 'intellectual fodder that would neuseate a grown-up', and forgets to mention that the grown-ups, apparently nauseated, number the 45,000,000 U.S.A. adults who 'thrive' (?) on the foul stuff. Thus the whole issue of this vast festering of our body cultural is politely sidetracked.

In fact the comparative gentility of presentment cannot hide the blood-kinship of the *Eagle* to the *Daily Mirror* and the *Superman* strips. Only a few thin veils have to be torn before we reach such a product as *How Communism came to America*, a 20-page coloured strip luridly relating how Communists seek power by inciting anti-negro and anti-semitic riots and so on. This violent work was issued by the Catholic Church.

(12) But let the critics have the last word. Thus, Dr. F. Wertham, Senior Psychiatrist of the N.Y. City Department of Hospitals, has recently been given space in the *Christian Herald* and in *Colliers* to attack strips as degenerate. This attack of his is the 'crusade' deplored by objective scientists of the *Journal of Educational Sociology*. But his feelings are shared by many Americans. Some 44 per cent. of the 3,000 questioned by Zarburgh thought that comics (as distinct from strips) were harmful to child-character; another 21 per cent. opposed them for cultural or other reasons. A large number disliked the violent comics, and classified their heroes in the following order of disapproval: *Dick Tracey*, *Superman*, *Batman*, *Flash Gordon*. . . .

It is clear that people can be conditioned to accept what capitalist enterprise sets out in a big way to sell them. But it is also clear that when asked (all too rarely) to think, even if only in answer to a questionnaire, something of doubt and resistance begins to stir in them. A fundamental decency begins to assert itself.

And when that happens, among enough people and for a long enough time, the rule of the comics is threatened, and the rule that lies behind it. Without being able to establish statistically the parts played by regressive elements in press, radio and film, in stunting and stultifying the growth of large masses of people, we can safely affirm that the comic strip plays a major part in this process. No one who has any love or care for the great traditions of our culture in Britain can watch the intrusion of this decadent and barbarous form without dismay, without a determination to fight against it in all possible ways.

E. P. Thompson

ON THE LIBERATION OF SEOUL

American bulldozers had smashed through debris littering the street, and MacArthur and President Rhee drove to the Capitol.

General MacArthur asked all present to join him in the Lord's Prayer. He said that 53 nations had risen up in 'spiritual revulsion

against the march of imperialistic Communism,' and added: 'By the grace of a merciful Providence our forces, fighting under the standard of that greatest hope and inspiration of mankind, the United Nations, have liberated this ancient capital city of Korea. . . . Its citizens once more have the opportunity to live under that immutable concept of life which holds invincibly to the primacy of individual liberty and personal dignity.'

PRESS REPORT.

*The Nobadaddy aloft
Farted and belched and cough'd,
And said, 'I love hanging and drawing and quartering
Every bit as well as war and slaughtering.
Damn praying and singing,
Unless they will bring in
The blood of ten thousand by fighting or swinging.*

WILLIAM BLAKE.

At 02.00 hours the incarnate concept
of dignity, etc., put on Its sun-goggles, and
gave the order to advance, since any Friday
or Monday the millenium might be at hand.

Butter would not melt in that black mouth,
I think. These persons were so good
their halos rolled like hoops among the rubble
and the warm red humbug and the litter of smashed wood.

Mercy was not of this column, being on leave
whiting some sepulchre, performing those ablutions
on that Black House. But, there! She will be back
in time at least to postpone the last executions.

like the dear hygenic nurse she is, with hands
smelling of soap, red nails, sweet sister to poor Pity
who got stuck in the suburbs under a ram.
At 14.00 hours, anyway, they entered the city,

blessing the place beforehand with phosphorus,
prophesying with fire that spiritual spring
which was soon evident by snowdrops in the jeeps
and aconites of yellow flesh all over everything.

O what a service there was done then for the liberals!
Priests (as it were) were unctioning in raids
libating the extreme napalm on those yellow heads.
Why, white men even were sacrificed on roads,

a very spiritual atmosphere. It kept them at it,
bulldozing half a day, before the spooks
and other crocks were shifted, and It could get through
to dedicate that altar to the individuality of gooks.

It would surprise some what a merciful Providence can do,
being revulsed. UNO in one in three,
Itself (MacArthurhead) and Chiang-Kai-Shek
and (hush!) that holyghoster Syngman Rhee.

Not the Old Testament showed so much grace
(before *and* after meat) as those guns did:
and for those living lady gooks it was not suffered
that any of their personal graces should be hid.

So many mortals were liberated on that day
out of their cage of skin and freed into the airs,
it is curious that a buzzard ate the speeches,
and odd that flies should have blown on the prayers.

It was remarked upon. But the turn-out was splendid.
'Quite like old times,' the vizor and goggles said.
Now, children, hallowèd be this memorable service
which you may meditate upon before you are dead

when Morality, that immaculate lady, came in season,
and Nobadaddy mounted her in rut,
and she was conceived by him of a black millenium
when all are free from sin, their throats being cut.

THE FREEDOM OF THE WEST

WHAT we print in this section can only be a more or less random
selection of events signifying the regression of the West. The
descent is so rapidly abysmal, and so widespread, that anything like
a full chronicle would take up the whole of Arena several times over.
Every week shows an extraordinary speeding-up of the processes of
decay.

But we wish also to stress that to depict this decay of ruling-class
culture and the violent corruption of the various organs of mass-
expression or communication, which are at the disposal of the con-
trollers of the Western World, is not to attack British (or U.S.A.)
culture as such—that is, to under-estimate its magnificent heritage and
traditions, or the struggling elements in it today which make for
liberation and happiness.

(1) There has been set up in the U.S.A. a National Psychological
Strategy Board, which is to include representatives of the Department

of Defence, the Joint Chief of Staffs, and the Central Intelligence Agency. It will maintain liaison with the Security Resources Board and the Economic Co-operation Administration.

(2) Eisenhower, as President of Columbia University, on September 4th launched a Crusade for Freedom, which is to establish private radio stations and send out material for distribution all over the world. Privately financed, it has set up its first station in Berlin. General Lucius Clay has been put in charge of the Crusade.

(3) The Economic Co-operation Administration is using Counter-part Funds to launch a large-scale propaganda drive in Western Europe. \$84,000 have been allocated to Britain, with more to come as required.

(4) The North Atlantic Council of Deputies has taken steps to build up an information staff, to aid member States in promulgating the aims of the organisation.

(5) Truman announces \$89,000,000 scheme to carry the U.S. way of life to all parts of the world.

(6) An U.S.-inspired Conference of 'Intellectuals for Freedom' has been held in Berlin to counter the Peace Movement.

(7) On August 26th, at the U.N.E.S.C.O. session, the Americans demanded that U.N.E.S.C.O. be made a war-instrument and support the action against the Koreans. At a closed session lasting some 24 hours much resistance was offered, but in the 'compromise resolution' the Americans substantially got their way. U.N.E.S.C.O. agreed 'within its competence to render all possible assistance to the action undertaken' in Korea.

The Master's Voice echoes back from Britain. Francis Williams in the *News Chronicle* calls for 'planning not only for unity in military strategy but also in the field of what has come to be called psychological warfare, although I prefer an older and better name: the battle of ideas.' etc.

'Since propaganda derives its success from a repetition of a single theme, the central organisation of the Political Warfare Department should ensure that we all say the same thing at the same time,' Hamilton Kerr, M.P., in *The Times*, December 27th, 1950.

National Independence. 'It is inconceivable that the British Government should attempt to arrogate to itself, under the guise of membership of the United Nations, the slightest warrant or judgement on the propriety of the mission of an American officer in compliance with the order of his own Government,' MacArthur on Himself and Formosa.

Freedom of Academic Thought. 'Professor Ralph Spitzer, an American scientist, was yesterday detained by the Dutch immigration officers as an undesirable alien, and later he was put on the liner Noordam for New York. Spitzer was dismissed from Oregon University last March after writing in support of the Russian biologist Lysenko,' *Daily Herald*, September 19th, 1950.

AN APPEAL

IN the dearth of any literary magazines of a national standing, and the general decline of culture in Britain which that dearth exposes, it is of the greatest importance that *Arena* should survive and should extend its audience.

With No. 5 we turned directly to the task of dealing with the crucial issues which culturally and politically confront us in Britain today. We intend to continue this work with all the thoroughness, energy and incision that we can muster. And as a necessary counterpart of this critical work, to print the best in prose and verse of younger writers, in which a reply to the ruling pessimisms can be made.

If we are to continue this work we shall need all the aid that you can give us. Costs of materials and production have risen so sharply that this aid is essential if we are to maintain our low price. Above all, we appeal to readers to bring our review to the notice of friends and to do all that they can to widen the circle of those buying it. But we also ask for aid in the form of *Guarantees* or *Gifts*, and from the next issue will print a list of those coming to our rescue.

Consider the job we are doing, and the much larger job we can do as our influence extends, and you will agree about the importance of keeping alive a magazine which is the *only literary review* left in our Britain tackling the national issues. That at this juncture the only such magazine is one with the politics of *Arena* is something that you can surely be proud of. Help us to make the most of this remarkable opportunity.—*The Editorial Board.*